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THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE SOVIET UNION

Final Report

by

Edward N. Luttwak

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

March 25, 1982

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THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE SOVIET UNION

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THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF SOVIET POWER

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I. Introduction: What is the Soviet Union?

Unless we accept the Soviet claim that Lenin's coup d'etat gave birth to an entirely new state, and indeed a new era in the history of mankind, we must recognize in today's Soviet Union the old empire of the Russians -- the only European empire that still survives. In a Darwinian vein, it might be said that when nationalism came to dominate the political attitudes of mankind, in Europe first and in the whole world later, the Russian empire survived and prospered because Lenin and the Bolsheviks imposed upon it a trans-national ideology, at a time when all the other empires were going into dissolution for want of a similar remedy.

Lenin can therefore be seen as the only logical successor of the Czars. Constitutional-democrats, social-democrats and all manner of others including the Czars themselves might still rule the Russians themselves, but in the new era of nationalism, only a trans-national dictatorship could preserve the empire. By accepting national sentiments as legitimate, but only within cultural bounds, after first decisively subordinating all ethnic priorities to the world-wide class struggle, the ideology that Lenin brought to power could justify the refusal to grant independence to each of the many nations of the empire; and this was a refusal that an efficient dictatorship could forcefully impose, as it still does. The largest empire known in history is thus preserved almost intact till this day while only memories and the smallest fragments remain of the Hapsburg, British, French, Dutch,

Spanish and Portuguese empires which ruled much of the world in the days when Lenin came to power.

But of course the true successor of the Czars was Stalin rather than Lenin, because during the latter's tenure trans-national communism remained the true ideology -- which meant of course that the Russians and their power were supposed to serve the interests of world-wide communism. It was Stalin who turned the proposition right around by first establishing a clear priority for Soviet state interests over the world-wide revolutionary cause ("Socialism in one country"), and then going on to exploit the powerful loyalties that trans-national communism could attract for all they were worth, to serve the interests of the empire of the Russians. By so doing, Stalin became the prudent keeper and successful aggrandizer of the Czars' inheritance, as his successors remain till this day - a fact of great consequence in setting limits to the attractions of dissidence inside the Soviet Union as far as the Russians themselves are concerned.

Of the role of ideology as one of the instruments of Soviet strategy more will be said below, but in view of the unfortunate persistence of our debates on the matter, it is immediately necessary to confront the issue of ideological motives in Soviet conduct. It is not illegitimate to draw a direct comparison between trans-national Communism and the Soviet empire on the one hand, and missionary Christianity and the Byzantine empire on the other. We know that the rulers of Constantinople exploited the gains of missionary Christianity to promote the interests

of their empire whenever and wherever they could, even while being perfectly sincere in their own devotion to the creed. That men can both truly believe in an ideology and yet seek to use it to enhance their own temporal power seems paradoxical only to outsiders. To the protagonists themselves there is no contradition: their solid justification is that the greater their power, the greater is their ability to protect and disseminate the true faith.

Certainly the Byzantine record suggests that it is unprofitable to speculate on the personal devotion of the rulers who so assiduously promoted the faith, and that it is quite futile to try to distinguish between ideological and state-political motives in their policies. Every religious act was meant to strengthen the state against its temporal enemies, internal or external; and every political act was meant to sustain the true faith in a world filled with unbelievers and heretics. The same, incidentally, was true of Czarist Russia. Thus for example during the later nineteenth century, the Czars assiduously promoted the proselytizing of the Russian Orthodox Church inside the Ottoman empire and especially in Palestine (where it grew greatly, but only at the expense of Greek Orthodoxy). Was this effort motivated by religious considerations alone, or was the Russian missionary church an arm of Russian foreign policy, in the competition with the British, French and Germans for influence in the Levant? To show that the Byzantines or the Russians under the Czars would frequently ignore the religious aspect of things in their dealings with foreign unbelievers or heretics proves

nothing because the Emperors could validly claim that it was a question of survival for them to do so - and the state that would thus survive was the only guarantor of the safety of the true church in the first place. To show by documentary evidence that it was the court that financed Byzantine missionaries, or that the Czar's foreign ministry paid for the churches, monasteries, hospitals and schools that were built in such great numbers in Ottoman Palestine again proves nothing, because the emperor was the head of the Byzantine church just as the Czar's foreign ministry belonged to a government which was itself the official protector of the Russian Orthodox faith.

Similarly, in our own days, the Soviet Union loudly protested the imprisonment of Egyptian communists under Nasser and the executions of Sudanese communists under Numeiri. It might seem that a purely state-motivated diplomacy would have refrained from such intrusive protests. But in both cases it can also be argued persuasively that it was precisely for diplomatic reasons, and not because of any pure ideological solidarity that the complaints were made -- for in both cases the protest was most convenient: in Nasser's regard to forcefully remind him of his debt to the Soviet Union, and with the Sudanese much later to provide justification for the Soviet liaison with Libya. Especially revealing is the record of Soviet relations with Iraq, whose successive dictators have had close connections with Moscow even while persecuting and indeed exterminating Iraqi communists from time to time. Ever since the overthrow of the

monarchy in July 1958, the Soviet Union, under a variety of agreements, has supplied Iraq with arms, including large numbers of "high-profile" weapons such as battle tanks and combat aircraft of modern design. Over the years, the Soviet Union and Iraq have cooperated in a variety of military joint ventures, and the formal agreements signed between the two countries include the fifteen-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of April 1972. And yet during the same period, the attitude of Iraq's rulers to their local Communists has alternated from a grudging toleration up to their inclusion in the government at cabinet level, all the way down to outright massacre -- and no obvious correlation can be established at all between the ups and downs in Soviet-Iraqi relations, and the abrupt changes in the government's treatment of the Iraqi Communist party. When the sufferings of their Iraqi comrades were brought to the attention of Soviet leaders by French and Italian communists, the Kremlin's self-justification was identical to the Byzantine argument: to wit that the world-wide enhancement of the faith sometimes imposes the cruel necessity of disregarding the welfare of some of its immediate representatives. And of course, the Kremlin would no more accept a distinction between the interests of the state, and those of the faith which the state upholds, than the rulers of Byzantium would have done.

The Question of Nationality

Lenin and his party seized power over the Soviet state by an act of force, and their Bolshevik regime immediately had to struggle against domestic and foreign foes by brutal repression and war; nevertheless it was the firm belief of the early leaders that once tranquility would be restored, education widely promoted, and a modest prosperity achieved, their ideology and rule would find genuine acceptance throughout the lands that Moscow controlled. Had that hope been realized, today's Soviet state would be a consensual union of nationalities linked by a common ideology, even if the dictatorship of each (national) communist party would have to continue till the advanced stage of communism was finally achieved -- when the state structure itself would wither away. In other words, the Soviet state was supposed to evolve into a voluntary confederation. The independence willingly conceded to Finland, and rather less willingly to the three Baltic states, was a tangible manifestation of this early attitude; and indeed the nominal right of each national "republic" to become independent has been reaffirmed in successive Soviet constitutions, if only to remain a dead letter as so much else in those documents.

It was neither Lenin's terror nor Stalin's that precluded the emergence of a genuine trans-national state, but rather the primacy gradually accorded to the Russian nationality within the Soviet Union. Lenin had consistently treated Russian nationalism as the chief domestic antagonist of his creation; it was not by accident (as Pravda might say) that the most sentitive positions -- [illegible] -- were [illegible]

filled by Estonians, Poles, Jews, Finns, Georgians and so on. It was only natural, after all, that small (and weak) nationalities would be especially responsive to a trans-national creed that would place all on an equal footing. Russian nationalism, on the other hand, was inseparable from Czardom and the church, and indeed it had shaped the world-view of the official class of the ancient regime.

But once the Bolshevik state was duly organized with a large and growing bureaucracy, its economic apparat and its state services military and social, it was inevitable that the more educated peoples within the USSR should lead the less advanced in the implementation of "socialism" in the economy, in education, and in the entire structure of the new totalitarian state -- and once the Finns, Estonians, Lithuanians and Latvians all became independent, it was the Russians themselves who remained as the most "advanced" nationality of any size inside the Soviet Union.

In the beginning, therefore, the primacy of the Russian people within the Soviet Union was the unavoidable reflection of the achievements and qualifications of individual Russians and thus unchallengeable; the mass of teachers and managers, bureaucrats and soldiers, party leaders and publicists and could obviously be supplied only by the educated class, which happened to be predominantly Russian. Since Russian nationalism as such was still very much in disfavor, and since "cultured" elements from all other nationalities could and did share fully in this primacy which was then still a professional rather than a national phenomenon, there was no contradiction between the trans-nacional ideology and the clear predominance of ethnic Russians in all leading roles.

It was under Stalin that the transformation of a professional primacy into a national supremacy took place. Well before the German invasion of June 1941, Stalin began to appeal -- if only in a carefully controlled degree -- to the loyalties that Russian nationalism could still evoke for the ruler who held the Kremlin, whether Czar or commissar. When the German war began, it became clear almost immediately that the Red Army was disastrously outclassed; all restraints were then removed and everything possible was made to identify the regime with the Russian motherland. To do so was a necessity of war -- or at least it must have seemed so at the time -- for Stalin could scarcely have foreseen that the Germans would themselves provide the most ample incentives for a fierce resistance by soldiers and partisans alike, Russian and non-Russian, by their immense brutalities.

For the revolutionary Soviet state, the abrupt reversion to the symbols, language and emotions of Russian nationalism was itself revolutionary. Once repudiated as class enemies and imperialists, the successful fighting figures of the Russian past were quite suddenly restored to heroic status and greatly celebrated in print, on film and in that characteristic Bolshevik medium, the large wall-poster. The Russian motherland became once again a fitting subject of veneration, as a mystic entity rather than one merely geographic, and even the Russian Orthodox Church was accorded a new and much higher status not as a spiritual institution of course but at least as a national one. Moscow, it seems, was worth a good many liturgies and also the several seminaries reopened and the many churches restored to churchly use.

The great military leaders and greater Czars of the Russian past, Suvurov and Kutuzov, Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, Alexander Nevskii and Alexander I were powerful but dangerous allies for Stalin and the Party. These names and all that went with them by implication, namely the empire-building of the Russians, could be just as irritating to the sensitivities of non-Russians as they were a source of pride and loyalty for the ethnic Russians themselves. It is one thing to speak of Cromwell or Kitchener among the English; quite another to remember their names in the company of Irishmen or Afrikaaners. Historians of the Second World War have generally seen fit to praise Stalin's restoration of Russian nationalism to official favor, giving him credit for "flexibility" and guile, especially since the man who thus gave back their history and national pride to the Russians was himself a Georgian. Above all, it is taken for granted that the nationalist restoration was necessary to sustain the Soviet war effort.

But since it is now known that in virtually every non-Russian ethnic group in the USSR that came under German occupation there was a very widespread willingness to collaborate with the new power in the land (and among the Russians too, at first), it is difficult to say whether Stalin's maneuver was truly successful. If it is reasonable to believe that the Russians fought better for their own ethnic motherland than for the abstract entity of the [illegible], it is just as likely that the non-Russians were alienated by the nationalist restoration, which inevitably made them into less than [illegible] citizens. [illegible]

fact that the German army reached most of the non-Russians only in the summer of 1942 (by which time the new nationalist propaganda was going full blast), and that the Germans found many willing collaborators among them -- including tens of thousands of volunteers for the Waffen S.S. are matters of historical record. As for the true impact of the nationalist campaign on the fighting morale of the Russians themselves, that too is difficult to judge because German atrocities must have had a far more powerful impact than any number of nationalist articles and books, films or posters.

But if the necessity and net value of the nationalist restoration must remain in doubt, what is perfectly clear is that it was an admission of failure. In spite of twenty years of consolidation and pervasive propaganda, the Soviet state had failed to attract enough loyalty to be defended for what it was, or so at least its leader believed. Faced with the crisis of the German invasion and enormous defeats of the Summer of 1941, the Soviet state had to assume the protective disguise of the Russian motherland. In view of what has happened since then, it might rather be said that the original trans-national Soviet Union was in fact defeated in 1941, and that it surrendered to Mother Russia in preference to surrendering to the Germans. That clearly was the better alternative, but it was a surrender all the same.

Just as nationalism is normally a cohesive force in nation-states, it must be divisive in states that contain many different nationalities. The nationalist restoration that pleased so many Russians in 1941 and pleases them still, must

have been just as displeasing to non-Russians, and it still is. Ideologically, a powerful contradiction was engendered between the official trans-national creed and the Kremlin's elevation of the Russian people to a quasi-official supremacy over all other nationalities. Politically, a fundamental tension was created between the multi-national composition of the state and the primacy accorded to just one of the nationalities.

Having triumphantly survived the advent of the National Idea by issuing the promissory note of a trans-national future, the Soviet Union thus began to default on the payments in 1941. Given the circumstances of the time, however, the creditors could do little to press their claims. For one thing, ethnic Russians (with the largely assimilated Byelorussians) then still accounted for a good majority of the total population of the USSR, and many others also identified with the Russians even if of diverse ethnic origins, notably many Jews and the educated, Westernized elements among the more backward nationalities. In any case the Muslim peoples of Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus were then still so backward that their identity was defined by family, tribe, clan and religion rather than nationality; in other words, they were in a pre-nationalist stage. Finally, the more advanced nationalities in today's Soviet Union, the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians of the Baltic states, and the Poles, Ruthenians and Ukrainians of the "western" Ukraine, were not in the Kremlin's keeping at all, until after the reoccupation and annexations that came at the end of the Second World War.

In the latest (1979) census by contrast, ethnic Russians accounted for no more than 52.4% of the population and even if one adds heavily assimilated Byelorussians that percentage is still only 56%. In the meantime, the general betterment of their circumstances has brought all the peoples of Soviet central Asia and the Caucasus to the stage of national consciousness, and by a coincidence most unfortunate for their rulers, this has happened at a time when Islam has once again become a very militant, political phenomenon.

What census returns cannot measure is the apparently widespread reversion of non-Russian elites from more backward nationalities to their own distinct national consciousness. It is known that the more educated among the Turkic peoples (Uzbeks, Tartars, Kazakhs, Azeris, Turkmens, Kirgiz and Bashkirs), the Iranian peoples (Tadzhik, Osetins and Kurds) and the Ibero-Caucasians (Chechens and Kabardians) were quite voluntarily becoming Russified during the 1920s and 1930s. The small minority of educated men and the few educated women of those nationalities were "pulled" towards the Russian language and "Soviet" culture by all the attractions of joining the leading nationality, and a modern culture, and they were being "pushed" in the same direction by the fact that their own communities offered little scope for men of modern outlook, while being mostly hostile to emancipated women. At the same time, with trans-nationalism still dominant in the Kremlin, many elite Armenians, Georgians and Jews were also becoming self-Russified -- if only because a Russian cultural identity was seen as the gateway to high career advancements. To put it crudely, many hoped to emulate the spectacular careers of the Armenian Mikoyan, the Georgian Beria (not to speak of Stalin himself) and

of such Kremlin Jews as Kaganovich.

In, say, 1930 it would have been reasonable to expect that the better educated among the non-Russians would become thoroughly assimilated into a synthetic "Soviet" identity by say, 1980. This obviously has not happened. On the contrary, a process has been underway that can only be described by the clumsy word "disaffiliation". Instead of becoming "new Soviet men" of Russified outlook it seems that most Turkic, Iranian and Ibero-Caucasian intellectuals have instead chosen to lead the national-consciousness movements of their own peoples; and even the unbelievers among them share in the cultural, if not spiritual, revival of Islam. As for the elite Armenians, Georgians and Jews who were so eager to Russify themselves in the 1930s, their reversal has been spectacular: in spite of the total absence of sound statistics, there is ample evidence to show that these groups, once so well disposed towards trans-nationalism have instead reaffirmed their national identities (in the case of the Jews to the point of seeking emigration in very large numbers; some 250,000 actually left the USSR between 1967 and 1981). And then finally the peoples absent till 1945, the Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Ruthenians, "western" Ukrainians and the Moldavians (or Romanians) of annexed Bessarabia are all now pressing their national claims loudly enough to be heard in the West from time to time.

Larger than any of these, the Ukrainian nationality has also maintained itself as distinct in spite of both centrally-imposed Russification and a degree of continuing self-Russification. It is impossible to determine to what extent disaffiliation is underway and to what extent voluntary self-Russification still continues, but it is obvious that if Ukrainians were to reaffirm their distinct national consciousness in the same degree as the Armenians, Georgians and Jews have done, that would be disastrous from the viewpoint of the rulers in the Kremlin.

A world-wide trend of ethnic reaffirmation is now obviously in evidence, but it is impossible to avoid the judgement that elite self-Russification has given way to "disaffiliation", because non-Russians feel themselves to be much less than equals in the highest ranks of the Soviet power elite. Among ordinary folk as well, nationalist reversion has been given a most powerful impetus by the nationalist restoration of the Russians themselves. Obviously, non-Russians could scarcely take part in the glorification of the Russian people and their achievements.

Moreover, their elevation in status as the Soviet Union's "leading nationality" has given the Russians some license for the expression of a sense of superiority over all other nationalities, and this in turn has caused the latter to fall back on their own ethnic identity. In the case of the Jews, it is known that a process of assimilation already well advanced was interrupted and then undone by the revival of Russian anti-semitism and indeed its official sanction during the last years of Stalin and again after 1967. Ultimately, it was inevitable that the public reassertion of Russian national pride would evoke competitive reaction by all other nationalities; a viscious circle has been engendered in which non-Russian hostility stimulates Russian assertivenes, which in turn causes resentment.

Stalin had been the Party's expert on nationality questions before he rose to supreme power and became the Party's expert on all things. He must have been fully aware of the danger that the Russian nationalism he unleashed would become powerfully devisive in peacetime; and in fact even before Berlin fell to his armies, Stalin tried to restore the primacy of class over nationality. He ordered an end to the anti-German campaign and revived the pre-1941 distinction between Hitlerites and the good working people of Germany, and a serious effort was made to force the Russian-nationalist genie back into the bottle. But an increasingly decrepit Stalin could not accomplish that most difficult [illegible] and his successors have lacked

the capacity or perhaps the will to do so. It is one thing to recall chauvinistic books and films from distribution or to cover up Russian-nationalist posters with new ones on class-struggle themes, and quite another to restore a consistently trans-national attitude throughout a predominantly Russian bureaucracy of immense size. Once the Soviet regime lifted the trans-national mask to reveal the features of Russian supremacism, the consequences could not be undone by merely lowering the mask once again. Certainly the memory must have been indelible upon those non-Russians who had truly believed in the trans-national promise that Lenin had issued. Besides, the Russians themselves had by then learned a new repertoire of words and attitudes formally compatible with the official trans-nationalism but nationalist and indeed supremacist in tone and substance.

But there is also a far more fundamental cause for the perpetuation of the nationalist restoration: the Soviet Union's economic failure. Even as late as the early 1960s, Soviet leaders were in the habit of uttering rather specific promises of high living standards to come in the near future. Soviet citizens were then being told that they would live far better in, say,

1980 than their western European or their American counterparts. Had the Soviet economy developed as the Kremlin leaders (and a good many others) had expected including those Western economists who were forever comparing high Soviet growth rates with the much more modest growth of the United States during the 1950s, the Soviet Union would now be in a position to attract the economically-motivated loyalty of Russians and non-Russians alike. Though living standards have certainly improved, especially for the more backward Central Asian and Caucasian populations, today's Soviet Union, cannot possibly present itself as economic advancement--and for the Russians themselves least of all. They are as well-informed of Western standards of living as the advanced Baltic nationalities and the enterprising Armenians, Georgians and Jews, while at the same time, their own standard of living is distinctly inferior. In the absence of meat, circuses must be offered instead, and the most seductive circus of all is the stimulation of Russian national pride.

There is an even simpler explanation of the television and indeed for the [illegible] Russian nationalism by the authorities: today's Soviet

rulers are themselves almost all Russians (or Byelo-russians), in sharp contrast to the truly trans-national leadership of Stalin's day, when in the highest echelons of the Kremlin the Russians were merely one nationality among several.

Since the promise of a voluntary trans-national confederation has not been realized, and since it obviously cannot be a nation-state, today's Soviet Union must be an empire - that is, a state in which one nationality dominates the homelands of many. In fact, the Soviet Union is the only remaining multi-national empire of any consequence, except for the People's Republic of China where, however, the non-Han nationalities are demographically insignificant (even if their homelands account for a large part of the entire territory).

Moreover, since Russification and voluntary self-Russification have been aborted, the Soviet empire is not, and will not become, a Russian empire in the way that the Czar's empire truly was, or the Roman became. In days of the Czars, the non-Russian nationalities counted for so much less in the political realm than in today's Soviet Union. In the Roman case, on the other hand, the political cement of elite Romanisation very quickly followed in the wake of territorial conquest. By that process the empire of the Romans, or more specifically the empire created by the leaders of the city of Rome became [illegible] that was Roman only in its

public culture, in which elites of diverse ethnic origin could rise to the highest levels of power in all branches of the state. Plainly that is not the case in today's Soviet Union where, to the contrary, a multi-national revolutionary elite has given way to a Russian bureaucratic elite. With Lenin's promissory note now in default, the Soviet Union finds itself confronted by the very force that dissolved all the other empires that loomed so large in Lenin's day: the National Idea - and this time it cannot be fought by any means except for repression pure and simple.

II. The Traditional Pattern of Soviet Strategy

The empire of the Russians of our own days is by far the largest of all empires known to history. But it is worth recalling that this great expansion took place largely in the void, or at least at the expense of weak powers. Except for Peter the Great's encounters with the Ottoman empire, it was only in 1812 and again in 1941-45 that the Russians waged successful war against an enemy that was unambiguously a first-class power. In both cases the Russians did not prevail alone, and it is most doubtful that they could have done so. In both cases moreover, their victories were won on the first counter-offensive, after their enemies had exhausted themselves by stretching their forces and supply lines to invade deep into the vast space of Russian lands.

With these exceptions, the centuries of successful expansion under the Czars saw Russian colonists moving east into Siberia and north into Karelia against the feeble opposition of small tribes, while Russian armies fought against Lithuanian, Polish and Swedish kingdoms that were never first-class powers, against the Tatar Khanates and the Ottoman empire in decay, and the Chinese

empire at its weak outer peripheries, and against Caucasian tribes and central Asian emirates lacking in the modern weapons of the day. In spite of the many victories in the record of Russian imperial expansion, we thus find not one case of successful war deliberately launched against a first-class power.

Ever since Peter the Great, the Czars could have great confidence in their eventual ability to defeat an enemy - any enemy - that would first deplete its strength by invading deeply into their immense territories. But the Czars had good reason to doubt their ability to use military power in a deliberate fashion, to launch successful offensive warfare against a first-class power.

It is, of course, a commonplace of military theory that the defense is stronger than the offense strategically as well as tactically, but in the Russian case there was an unusually great disparity between the very great defensive strength of the country and its far smaller capacity to wage war offensively against serious opposition.

Two compelling reasons immediately present them-

selves to explain the contrast: the fragility of autocratic rule, and military backwardness - at least as compared to Western powers, which were the only first-class powers in contact with Russia after the eclipse of the Mongols and the decline of the Ottoman empire.

The throne of the Czars offered unlimited powers to its holder but it did not offer security of tenure. Until the nineteenth century, the succession was neither firmly dynastic nor elective but only "occupative". The Czar who would go campaigning in foreign lands at the head of his troops would risk losing the Kremlin to a rival claimant unless the outcome was swiftly successful; and an autocracy knew no substitute for the ruler himself when it came to an undertaking as great as an offensive war against a major power. In defending Russian lands against foreign invaders by contrast, the problem of legitimacy was greatly alleviated, since the Czar could remain in the Kremlin. Besides, all sound nations will rally around their ruler when home and country must be protected against the foreigner.

For Russia, military backwardness obviously did not mean weakness [illegible] in the seventeenth century or the

twentieth; and of this backwardness the purely technical part was in any case the least important. That Russian weapons might not be quite so well designed, and would certainly be more crudely built than those of the most advanced Western nations scarcely counts for much even in our own times of most rapid technical advancement, and certainly the difference counted for much less in centuries past when it might take sixty years for the use of the bayonet to spread across Europe, and a century or more before a new musket-firing mechanism would be generally issued.

Superior numbers and a military doctrine that recognizes technical inferiority and specifically seeks to circumvent it, can easily obliterate even quite large differences in the quality of weapons. Just as the clumsiest matchlocks could do very nicely even against the smartest flintlocks when the former were being fired by vast numbers from behind the shelter of redoubts, while the latter were in the hands of outnumbered troops advancing fully exposed to attack, so also the standard Soviet battle tanks in service in the nineteen-sixties could fight well by the dozen against outnumbered Western tanks, even if the latter had better guns and more sophisticated ancillaries; the latter could have a superior lethal range and a faster rate of engage-

ment owing to their fire-control electronics, but Soviet armored forces could overcome both by closing rapidly to eliminate the advantage of range, and then firing en masse to nullify the higher rate of engagement of Western tanks. In the Seventeenth century as in the Twentieth, the purely technical backwardness of the Russian armies counted for little, since numbers and the right tactics could easily nullify the differences in weapon performance.

It is, incidentally, interesting to note how readily Westerners explain Russian military successes as the result of sheer numberical advantage, and how reluctantly they recognize the virtues of Russian military thought. And yet before there was a Pushkin to be admired for his poetry, Suvurov had already proved the originality of Russian military strategy, and of Russian tactics and operational methods. What Suvurov taught should have been of great interest to all the armies of his day, but it was most specifically useful for the Russians themselves -- for whom his doctrine offered a way of compensating for technical weakness by exploiting their numerical strengths and the tenacity and excellent field-craft of the Russian soldier.

Far more consequential was another sort of backwardness that might most loosely be described as "managerial". In an economy always comparatively primitive, in a society where the rulers and the state have always

techniques, talents and subtle arts of running large-scale organizations well enough to compete with other well-run organizations were much less developed than in the greater and richer nations of the West.

In a defensive war waged inside Russia, simple orders enforced by drastic punishment, improvisations more or less disorderly, and all the expedients that come so readily to a people greatly familiar with shortages could suffice to deploy large armies in the field and keep them supplied. Even less was needed to sustain the peasants-in-arms that would wage petty warfare against the stragglers and outposts of an invading army. To mount large-scale offensive operations on the other hand, the advance of the armies must be concerted by advance planning and by central command thereafter; and supplies must be organized to follow closely in their wake, move by move and step by step. One talented commander-in-chief, or even several skilled and cunning generals cannot suffice to direct the whole complex operation; it takes organizers and "managers" by the hundreds to do that. And where in the old pre-industrial Russia would such men be found? Not among the bailiffs of lethargic estates or the old style [illegible] or small shopkeepers

of the towns, and least of all could they be drawn from the state bureaucracy, where the deadening safety of procedure and the arrogance of petty power combined to strangle managerial talent.

When Czarist Russia did belatedly industrialize and in a fairly big way, there was more need and more scope for management of good quality, and for all manner of organizational talent. But even then, an economy whose labor and many of whose basic resources were (and are) cheap, and whose products did not have to meet the test of the free market, would not demand high standards of efficiency.

Russian backwardness in management was by no means unique - it was (and is) the common lot of traditional societies. But it was the sheer geographic extent of the empire and its land-locked continental nature (which imposed overland deployment and supply) that made the "managerial" disadvantage so telling. It was the combination of the empire's geography and the defect of Russian society that crippled the potentially great military power of Moscow's rulers when they set out to wage offensive war on a large scale against serious enemies. Since the lands already theirs were so vast, great distances had to be covered by the armies merely to reach the enemy frontier, and this would place a great burden on supply lines poorly managed to begin with.

Moreover, the quality of junior officers is more important on the offense than on the defense. Since an advancing army must discover the placing and stance of the enemy as it moves forward, initiative is required down to the junior levels if the many small fighting decisions of each unit are to be made swiftly. That in turn obviously calls for a great number of officers willing to act by their own independent judgement, and on their own responsibility. These qualities are to be sure of great importance in resisting invasion as well as in invading. But on the defensive, just to stand and fight is of value, and to strike at the enemy wherever he might be is of cumulative value also. But on the offensive, that is not enough: specific lines of advance must be followed -- and yet not so rigidly that units will attack frontal positions which may be safely bypassed, or that units will move straight across dififcult terrain that might have been more easily circumvented. And of course the action must be purposefully concentrated on the offensive: to pursue any of the enemy whenever and wherever seen would only scatter an army into many feeble fragments.

For these reasons, the quality of junior officers' leadership and specifically their readiness to act on their own initiative count for much more on the offensive than on the defensive. It was in this regard that the Russians were at a great disadvantage. In a society rigidly hierarchical, in which a most strict conformity to rules and orders is imposed by draconian sanctions upon a people by no means as naturally disciplined as some, the habit is easily formed of passing all decisions to superior authority, whenever it is at all decent to do so. Certainly the will to take action on one's own responsibility is more likely to be suppressed than in a more tolerant and liberal society. In the Czar's days, and till quite recently, the tactical rigidity that resulted from over-centralization greatly diminished the offensive power of Russian armies, while having much less effect on their defensive strength.

When the poverty of Russian management, tactical rigidity, and the vast distances that had to be crossed to come to grips with an enemy are taken together, the great disparity between Russia's strength in defeating invasion and her own weakness in offensive operations is sufficiently explained. There is a clear continuity between the debacles of the Russo-Japanese war,

the catastrophic defeats of 1914 under the last of the Czars, the Bolshevik failure of August 1920 in fighting the Poles, and the weakness of Stalin's forces in the 1939–40 Winter War against the Finns. In each case, logistic inadequacy, a lack of tactical flexibility for want of junior-level initiative, and an unfavorable geography played their varied roles in defeating Russian aims. And then one may consider how poorly the Japanese or Finns would have done in invading Central Russia in 1904 or 1939, respectively, or the poor showing of the Poles in 1920. Two of those nations held back; others less prudent did not. On the defensive, Russia would always ultimately defeat her enemy - then advance to drive the invader out, and finally to invade in turn, making easy conquests against armies already defeated.

The pattern of defensive-offensive warfare that created the greatest empire on earth under the Czars was reproduced very faithfully in the Second World War, or the Great Patriotic War - as it is most significantly called in the Soviet Union. It is the enemy that attacks first, and most successfully in this case; German forces invade Russia [illegible] attained,

with Leningrad besieged, Moscow threatened, and Kiev occupied. The plans that the Russians had made turn out to be grossly inappropriate, and extraordinary incompetence is revealed at all levels of command with absurd and self-destructive orders being nevertheless obeyed. Huge losses of men and of territory are the result. But then the enemy army finds itself thinned out along the front since Russia's width increases from West to East as the Baltic and the Black Seas curve outwards. The enemy's lines of supply are more and more stretched, and it is harder and harder for his stock of vehicles to resupply the receding front. The few highways and railways are widely separated, and the vast tracts of country between them cannot truly be dominated. Local resisters and stranded soldiers can thus combine safely to form many little armies that begin to wage guerilla war on the long and thin lines of supply. Their attacks and their sabotage add to the breakdowns that bad roads and over-use inflict, so that fewer and fewer vehicles remain to feed a front that is still becoming wider and is still receding.

New Russian armies are now created, with new junior officers tested in battle, new generals of harsh

realism, and new methods mostly learned from the enemy. Manned by the many recruits that even the remaining half of unoccupied Russia has to offer, equipped by the industry that was already in remote safety or which was there evacuated, the new armies find their schooling in combat and begin to resist better, and then to counter-attack. The enemy who has triumphantly advanced is now captured by his conquests - everywhere he is weak and his whole array is over-extended. Only two choices remain to him: the abrupt withdrawal that would be inexplicable back home where all the territory won is seen as proof of strength rather than as the true cause of weakness it is; or else to stand fast to hold a defensive front under the constant threat of penetrations and encirclements. In such circumstances there are no longer any good seasons for combat in Russia: if spring, there is the deep mud that traps vehicles and exhausts marching men; if summer, there is the surprising heat, with no relief in a flat country which soon becomes dusty and insect-ridden; if autumn, mud again; if winter, there is the snow and ice, but mainly the cold that reaches spectacular extremes. In his weakness, the enemy is driven back step by step, so that he is too exhausted to defend his own initial frontiers when these are reached in retreat; if he stands, his armies are surrounded and destroyed;

and enemy units may simply disperse, to be rounded up by Russian soldiers if they are lucky or killed by outraged peasants if they are not.

Whatever the fate of the invading soldiers, that of the power that sent them is as bleak. Those new-made Russian armies will not simply go home once the invader is beaten and the war is won. Some net gain of territory or political control must ensue. It was by the accumulation of such gains, rather than by original aggressions that the Czars' empire was expanded in the West, and in 1945 Stalin added to their legacy by winning a war that he did not start, except in the Far East where a Japan beaten was swiftly dislodged from Manchuria.

But even in the wake of the large and successful offensives of the latter years of the Second World War (and the invasion of Manchuria was technically the most successful of all), the Soviet leaders still had good reason to lack confidence in the ability of their armed forces to mount offensive actions on a large scale and of precise and swift execution. Soviet forces could win battles large and small, but only when they had a not

superiority in materiel, only when mass could be employed in place of quality, and only when time and space allowed scope for such brute-force methods.

To be sure, there was nothing crude about Soviet theater-strategy after 1942, or about the operational method for armored warfare, which were fully developed by 1944. By then experienced command skills at the top (along with mass) could fully compensate for the still rigid and ponderous tactics of the single regiments and divisions. But this remaining disability meant that Soviet forces could still not be employed successfully to carry out swift operations of the sort that would require high levels of technical proficiency and qualities of command down to the junior level. The Soviet Union could have mounted a large-scale invasion of Western Europe, but its forces could not have carried out swift interventions or surprise aggressions where mass cannot be substituted for quality. This operational shortcoming obviously circumscribed the nature of the threat which the Soviet Union could present, even if the total quantum of its military power was already very great indeed.

III. THE NEW DYNAMICS OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE: FROM OPTIMISM TO PESSIMISM

From the day of its birth in Lenin's coup d'etat of November 6, 1917 (October by the old calendar) and until very recently indeed, the Soviet regime has been fundamentally optimistic, albeit for reasons that have varied over time.

At first, the Bolsheviks were optimistic about the

future even in the midst of famine and civil war because they were quite certain that revolutions similar to their own would soon break out in Germany and the other industrialized countries. This expectation was reflected in the conduct of Lenin's new-made government towards the Central Powers, whose armies were pressing hard against a disintegrating Russian front at the time of the coup d'etat. When a peace conference was convened in Brest-Litovsk on December 3, 1917, the Bolshevik delegation under Trotsky was ordered to employ delaying tactics with the Germans and Austro-Hungarians, in the belief that revolution would overtake those countries not just soon but actually in a matter of days or weeks. It was only at the end of February, 1918, when the Germans resumed their advance to penetrate deeply into Russian territory that Lenin decided to accept their terms. But this did not mean that the estimate of imminent revolution had been abandoned. On the contrary, Lenin's readiness to surrender huge territories including Poland, the Baltic provinces, much of the Ukraine, Finland and even in the Caucasus - very much more than the Germans had actually conquered - was due to his belief that the loss would soon be restored by the emergence of a fraternal Bolshevik Germany

(and indeed his concessions were reversed, but only by the Allied victory in November`.

During its first years, the Bolshevik regime could easily sustain belief in the imminence of world revolution. The mutinies and soldiers' "Soviets" in the French army and the German navy (which were imitated briefly in other armies also, albeit on a smaller scale), the sharp rise in political agitation by trade-unionists and assorted socialists and revolutionaries throughout Europe and beyond, and the actual Bolshevik uprisings in Germany and Hungary that briefly brought to power Soviet-style regimes, inspired the world-wide "red scare" of 1919-20, and they could also inspire red hopes.

By the time this first reason for optimism had waned, another had come to take its place. If the political millenium would have to wait an economic revolution could still be accomplished. Central planning would allow the Soviet Union to achieve rapid economic growth towards an unprecedented prosperity, thus eventually offering an irresistibly attractive model which all other countries would eventually have to copy. Not itself part of the Marxist inheritance but rather the offspring of the systems of economic control invented in both Germany and Britain during the great war

just ended (which had made possible the huge and indeed utterly improbable increases in war-production of the two countries), the direction of the economy by central planning seemed an innovation of epic proportions to the Soviet leaders.

From the inauguration of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928, the course seemed to be set for the achievement of high and sustained rates of growth that would eventually allow the Soviet Union to overtake every other economy and move far ahead. And this great result was to be achieved by a method remarkably simple: the state would appropriate all production allowing a minimum for personal consumption; the surplus would be used not to build factories and equip farms to produce consumer goods and food, but rather to expand the economy's energy supply, railways and other basic infrastructures but above all to increase the output of "producer" goods. But continuing to provide only a minimum of resources for immediate consumption while investing the maximum in machine-tools to make yet more machine-tools, the stage would eventually be reached when a greatly enlarged Soviet industry could turn to produce equipment to make consumer goods and farm machinery in great quantities; then the Soviet consumer would finally enjoy an unprecedented abundance.

Only three things were needed to ensure the success of the scheme: the control of all capital by the state so that the

long-term growth priorities could be enforced; the enthusiasm of the public or at least the willingness of all to work for very little while awaiting the great day; and peace.

The first requirement was so easily achieved in industry and commerce that its extension to agriculture seemed at least feasible if not easy. Factory owners and businessmen in general had either fled abroad or else they had been reduced to a frightened silence. The peasants, it is true, were very much in place and now the owners of the lands they tilled, but just as the factories had been "collectivized", the peasants too would have to give up their petty rights of ownership to form collectives. To do this was not a matter of ideology but rather an essential part of the whole scheme: the surplus production to be used for investment would largely have to come from the land, and the state bureaucracy could scarcely squeeze all there was from millions of independent farms. Hence the peasants would have to be organized into large units under party control so that their production could be more easily extracted by the state. What followed, of course, were all the miseries and massacres of forced collectivization which opened a wound which has turned out to be incurable.

immediate reward, was to be met by a combination of inspiring propaganda and police terror. Films, posters, books and songs explained the scheme and harnessed the enthusiasm of the young for the great projects that were the centerpieces of the plan; the competitive spirit was exploited in production "races" between work-teams and factories; high achievers were given personal recognition in medals and publicity -- in sum all the tricks of political propaganda and all the devices of commercial promotion were exploited in wave after wave of exhortation. As for the terror, that too was thoroughly done: shirkers were imprisoned, "saboteurs" were shot and tens of millions of peasants were collectivized by brutal compulsion. Propaganda and police were in themselves diversions from the production effort; but to the extent that production could be enhanced and consumption squeezed further, the resources given to the CHEKA and the Agit-Prop would handsomely pay for themselves.

The third requirement, peace, was a function of international politics, which was beyond the exclusive control of the Kremlin leader who otherwise controlled so much, but Stalin did what he could. A major war would inevitably interrupt the Soviet Union's steady ascent to the centrally-planned millenium -- the key to its eventual world-wide political victory -- and thus the Soviet Union followed a genuine peace policy, at least until 1939.

The prospect of an impending economic supremacy served to maintain the fundamental optimism of the Soviet leadership for several decades. perhaps until as late as the end of the

nineteen-sixties. But then finally it must have been recognized in the Kremlin that the perpetuation of the central-planning system, in effect a special kind of war economy, could not after all serve as the reliable highway to prosperity. Until the end of the nineteen-sixties, the ravages of the war -- and before that the original poverty of the Russian empire -- could serve as plausible excuses, not only for their propaganda, but for the rulers themselves. But after forty-odd years of central planning the great intellectual discovery was made, if only gradually and perhaps never completely: that central planning could indeed serve well in wartime to produce arms and ammunition in response to fixed specifications and quantity targets, but that it could not channel the right amounts of the right resources into the very many, very varied and always changing paths of peacetime economic development. In sector after sector, the Soviet system strives to produce more old-type goods even as radically new ones have already appeared on the world scene; it is not that too little is produced, but rather that the wrong things are produced: adding machines, even in the greatest number, cannot compete with digital computers any more than great quantities of cast iron can substitute for the right amounts of the right kinds of plastic. The very visible symptom of the Soviet economic failure was the slow rate of innovation, but the cause was the very structure of the system itself.

The other discovery of the late nineteen-sixties was equally sinister: in the sake of huge investments in agriculture, a fundamental structural malady was revealed there also.

Under Stalin's policy, Soviet farming has been starved of machinery and fertilizers; it was natural therefore to presume that given great quantities of both, all would be well. But when Soviet agriculture did finally receive vast resources, it turned out that there was a far more intractable obstacle to an adequate productivity: the state of the peasantry, which collectivization had long before deprived of the will to work carefully and well. Soviet agriculture absorbs more than seven times as much investment as its American counterpart but the return on that investment is spectacularly low: between 1950 and 1977 the capital stock of Soviet agriculture increased 11.9 times to yield an increase in output of 250%. At present added investment yields almost nothing.

The world is full of dissatisfied consumers and the prospect of an indefinite delay in delivering the long-promised abundance to the Soviet consumer was the least part of the regime's predicament. The decline in the rate of growth was far more serious for in the Soviet case, uniquely, economic failure undermines the very legitimacy of the regime. The welfare of two entire generations had been ruthlessly sacrificed to the pursuit of economic supremacy, the declared goal of Soviet national strategy since 1928 and the consequences of disappointing long-stoked expectations were awesome. Palliatives such as the importation of Western technology, excuses old and new, and grim forecasts of an impending great depression in the capitalist world could all serve to reduce the immediate political damage, but obviously the regime could no longer remain optimistic on economic grounds. Instead of overtaking the advanced economies, the Soviet economy was itself being overtaken.

Imperialism: The Last Stage of Soviet Optimism

Once again the waning of one hope coincided with the birth of another of a radically different sort. If the Soviet Union could no longer hope to conquer the world by the novel method of becoming its irresistibly successful economic and social model, it could instead pursue the lesser but still grandiose aim of becoming the world's leading military power. By sheer chance, the belated recognition of economic failure by the Soviet leaders at the end of the nineteen-sixties happened to coincide with the beginning of the abrupt and phenomenal decline of the United States as a military power. Already great in absolute terms, the decline was yet greater in comparison with the Soviet Union: while the armed strength of the United States was consumed both morally and materially in unsuccessful warfare, and was then diminished by further budgetary reductions year after year till at least 1976, the Soviet Union was steadily enhancing its capital of military equipment (in quality above all) and also of sound expertise.

During the same period, the authority of the United States on the world scene was relentlessly eroded by violent social disarray, by the perceptible loss of nerve of its policy elite.

and by the public attack upon all the institutions of power. All this engendered a fatal lack of tenacity in American conduct overseas, which cultimated in the outright abandonment of three dependent states. The damage was then further compounded by a foreign policy of indecision, renunciation, and outright retreat, which continued for several years after the final defeat suffered in Indochina. During that same period, the Soviet Union in contrast reaffirmed its strength and determination by forceful action in Czechoslovakia (which, it was soon noted, evoked no lasting sanction) and then proceeded to broaden the range of its influence; always a great power it became for the first time a global power also. While American prestige was sinking, the Soviet Union was gaining in authority from the reliable, if grim continuity of its policies. Moreover, as an inevitable consequence of the Strategic Arms Limitation negotiations, the Soviet Union also received a full and formal recognition of its co-equal status as a superpower -- also for the first time.

As a result of these sharply divergent trends, there could be no doubt in whose favor the global balance was shifting during the nineteen-seventies, and neither localized setbacks, such as the loss of Egypt as a client, nor all the varied consequences of Chinese hostility could alter the fundamental fact that the Soviet Union was emerging as the world's leading military power.

The Soviet Union thus found itself in the nineteen-seventies much more powerful

and also distinctly poorer than its leaders could reasonably have predicted even a mere decade before. It was thus only natural that the goal of economic supremacy, which had become utterly unrealistic, should have given way to the pursuit of imperial power as the new dominant aim of Soviet national strategy.

This momentous change was of pervasive effect especially because it converged with the other great transformation the restoration of Russian nationalism. One must exercise great care in trying to understand such complicated matters and their yet more complicated implications, but one thing is immediately obvious: while the pursuit of economic supremacy was fully consistent with the aspirations of all the nationalities of the empire, and those of the client-states too, the pursuit of imperial primacy on the world scene could only be a source of genuine satisfaction to the Russians themselves.

Had the Soviet Union become a voluntary confederation as Lenin had once hoped, all its nationalities might have shared in the psychic rewards of imperial status; to some extent, this might have been true even if only the highest leadership itself had remained trans-national, as in Stalin's day. But in a Soviet Union so clearly ruled by Russians, the members of other nation-

alities must regard themselves as subjects, and they can hardly gain much satisfaction from the prospect of expanding further the imperial domain of the Russian people.

Actually the novel pursuit of imperial power may be a new cause of resentment to the non-Russians. When the Soviet Union was still giving its highest priority to industrialization and growth, the sacrifices imposed on the population would be less painful in the degree that they offered the prospect of a happy future for coming generations. Many Russians, and perhaps most, might still willingly accept economic sacrifice for the sake of increasing yet further the power of a Soviet state that has become so clearly a Russian empire. But that cannot be so for the other nationalities. For the non-Russians, the pursuit of external power with all the military expense that it entails, and all the aid given to the menagerie of radical Third-World states, must merely seem a cause of their poverty; many, no doubt, believe it to be the leading cause. All Soviet citizens, Russians and non-Russians alike are, certainly, well aware of how greatly their standard of living has improved during the last thirty years or so. On the other hand, they also know that the peoples of all other industrialized countries (including their own client-states) enjoy a much higher standard of living than

themselves. It is a fair guess that the non-Russians are much more likely to blame military expenditures, and the cost of supporting overseas dependencies such as Cuba, South Yemen and Vietnam for the stringencies so vividly manifest in their daily lives.

There is also one additional factor. While the restoration of Russian nationalism long preceded the advent of the new era of Soviet imperialism (and indeed it was virtually a precondition of the great change) the two phenomena reinforce one another. The success of the Soviet Union as a power on the world scene stimulates the Russian national pride, and incidentally encourages all those manifestations of chauvinism that must unfailingly evoke the reactive nationalism of the non-Russians; on the other hand, Russian national pride encourages further the striving to globalize Soviet power. To the extent that the non-Russians do not in fact share in the psychic rewards of empire, the rise of Soviet power tends to antagonize the non-Russians, who pay their full share of the cost. Thus for both economic and psychological reasons, the new primacy given to external aggrandizement intensifies ethnic tensions inside Soviet society. The failure to fulfill the original trans-national promise is basic, but its consequences must be aggravated by the present direction of Soviet policy. This is the link between the last phase of optimism, and the advent of pessimism.

The Advent of Pessimism

If the Soviet leaders estimated during the early nineteen-seventies that the United States was in sharp decline as a world power and perhaps that it was destined to revert to isolationism, theirs would have been a pardonable error. True, many social indicators -- and the election of 1968 above all -- proved conclusively that for all the anti-war agitations and all the riots, the great majority of the American people remained firmly conservative and deeply patriotic. But such sentiments could only guarantee political stability at home, not activism abroad. A foreign policy of substance and action requires much more: not just the vague approval of the general public, but rather the specific support of Congress and of the media and policy elites that influence Congressional dealings with foreign affairs. And such support can only be forthcoming if those elites are in turn confident of themselves and of the ability of the American government as a whole to act wisely overseas. And on both counts there was much evidence by the early nineteen-seventies to support the prediction that the United States would indeed retreat from the world scene, if only gradually.

While outright isolationism had never truly been

the American stance and never would be by choice, in view of the retreat from globalism manifest by, say, 1972 it would have been reasonable to forecast that the perimeter of serious American concern would soon be restricted to Western Europe, Japan and possibly the Middle East, in addition to the western hemisphere. Similarly, while the United States would not of course disarm, the trends pointed to a great reduction in American military strength, particularly in regard to forces for distant inter-

Had the United States been confronted by evidence of a sharply diminished Soviet military effort, a responsive decline in American defense expenditures would have been inevitable since the procedures of Congressional budget-making for defense mean that every American military "program" must be cast as a response to some Soviet "threat"; had the overall "threat" diminished the defense budget would have declined also. But all procedures aside, such an outcome would have been consistent with the implicit national strategy of the United States, in which the foreign-policy instruments of choice are economic, technological, and cultural, while military power is merely the instrument of necessity. The reaction of Soviet leaders to the great decline in American military and foreign policy activism was naturally entirely different. For them, the accumulating evidence that

ment to yet more activism overseas since now their efforts would no longer be countered, as in the past, by American reactions. Moreover, since military power must be the primary instrument of choice for the Soviet Union lacking as it is in economic leverage, cultural influence and social appeal, the appropriate response to the decline of American military power was to increase the Soviet as much as possible. With the goal of achieving a clear primacy in military power at least within reach -- as it could never be when the United States was seriously competing, the incentive to enhance the strength of the Soviet armed forces was very greatly increased. In the past, some Kremlin leaders could argue that the inevitable American response would soon deprive the Soviet Union of whatever advantage could be gained by additional military spending; but once it became clear that the Americans would not seriously respond, all had to agree that it was indeed worthwhile to make that extra effort.

If the broad implication of the forecast of American decline was that more Soviet military expenditure was warranted, the specific implication was that more effort should be devoted to the increase of long-range intervention capabilities, especially the Soviet surface navy as well as airlift capacity, both for direct Russian use and also to convey Cuban and other client forces usable overseas. The American retreat thus created a powerful added incentive to globalize Soviet power. So long as the United States still had almost one thousand warships, any

Soviet flotilla sent far from Soviet shores would be dwarfed by American naval forces on the scene; but if a greatly diminished American Navy was to be expected, an increased Soviet naval effort would become profitable, since in the future the Soviet navy would actually be able to outmatch its declining counterpart. What was true for the Soviet navy was valid for Soviet military in general: once a goal previously beyond reach becomes attainable it is bound to evoke an added effort.

By the beginning of the nineteen-seventies, it seemed that the Soviet Union could indeed look forward to the day when it would become the world's greatest military power, and its only truly global power. A global reach for the Soviet Union would not of course mean global domination; nor could the Soviet Union attain a perfect, preclusive, security since the United States -- and not only the United States -- would still retain control of weapons of mass destruction. But certainly, even with such inevitable limitations, the achievement of a global primacy could justify for the Soviet leaders all the costs and all the risks of the pursuit of imperial power.

Matters did not turn out as so many, almost certainly including the Soviet leaders, had believed they would. By 1976, if not before, a net majority of the American public had clearly rejected the counsels of th

media and foreign-policy elites, which remained largely inimical to the restoration of an activist foreign policy, and to the rehabilitation of American military strength. But in faithful reflection of public opinion, Congress began to press with increasing success for higher defense spending, and by 1977 a President of contradictory impulses found himself compelled to spend more on defense than he might have wished, quite unable to proceed with his declared intent to disengage from Korea and forced to maintain a greater American Navy than he desired.

Strategy is made of paradox, irony and contradiction and it was only natural in that unnatural realm that it was the Soviet attempt to exploit the favorable trend that caused its abrupt reversal. In more detached fashion, it can be said that a Soviet national strategy necessarily based on military power (in the absence of any other comparative advantage) evoked a competitive reaction from the United States, whose own national strategy would otherwise have given less weight to that particular instrument of policy, in which the United States has a comparative disadvantage.

By 1980 matters had evolved to the point where it was clear that the United States would soon be competing in full force, both in the building of armaments and in

the activism of its foreign policy. Finally, by the beginning of 1981, the Soviet Union was presented with solid evidence of American determination to regain a global primacy in military power in the budget plans that a new Administration unveiled and which Congress would obviously support in large measure. To be sure, no conceivable increase in American defense expenditures could gain any sort of superiority in continental land-warfare forces, but for the strategic-nuclear and naval forces that was a perfectly feasible goal. Soviet ballistic missiles could not be usefully outmatched in quantity or even in quality, but they could be outclassed by the development of weapons of radically new form; and if Soviet submarines would still deny a true naval supremacy to the United States, its surface fleet at least could regain a clear ascendancy over the Soviet. As for continental land warfare, in which the combination of powerful Soviet ground forces, large anti-aircraft forces and less impressive tactical air forces would certainly remain stronger than the American combination of strong tactical airpower and weak ground forces, the overall strategic context made any direct comparisons irrelevant since the United States would not confront the Soviet Union alone, but rather in alliance with

many other countries in both Europe and East Asia. The exception of course, and of great significance, is the region of the Persian Gulf, where the United States has vital interests but lacks capable allies of any genuine military capacity.

It is true, of course, that an optimistic Soviet observer could find good reasons to discount the strength of the countries which would be associated with the United States in a continental conflict. In western Europe, such allies as have well-equipped armies are the most vulnerable and therefore the least resolute; other allies deploy forces which are mostly made of ill-equipped infantry, and much larger in form than substance, and other still, who do have forces of high quality, are weakened by shortages of modern equipment. As for East Asia, Japan for all its industrial capacity is still quite unable to protect her vital sea lanes or even the country itself, while the People's Republic of China for all its millions of militiamen and soldiers could not protect more than a part of its territory against Soviet invasion, and has no significant offensive strength. That fact, and the parallel inability of the European alliance to stage any serious offensive against the Soviet Union mean that China and Western Europe could not assist one another if either were attacked.

But as against all these undoubted weaknesses and deficiencies in the array of American alliances there is the simple fact that the Soviet Union is now encircled by enemies. Some are possessed of real military strength, even if of limited dimensions; others have at least the economic potential to acquire great military power in the future; and three of the antagonists of the Soviet Union have nuclear weapons, in addition to the United States itself. Americans may judge the British, French, and Chinese nuclear forces now aimed at the Soviet Union as technically weak in various ways and of insignificant size, but they would not treat them lightly if they were aimed at the United States. A classic paradox of strategy has been at work to the disadvantage of the Soviet Union: when a powerful country becomes yet more powerful, its strength may drive the very weakest of its neighbors into a frightened neutrality or outright client status, but neighbors marginally more secure will instead be stimulated to build up their own strength, and to cooperate with one another against the great antagonist that threatens them all. The Soviet Union is thus the true author of its own encirclement.

An optimism based on the hope of achieving an imperial primacy need not give way to regime pessimism merely because of the global reaction to the Soviet pursuit of global power - a reaction natural and inevitable and by no means sufficient in itself to deny the Soviet Union what it so assiduously seeks. As for the great reversal in the substance of American military policy

manifest by 1981 that indeed was rather more abrupt and entailed a more powerful re-armament than could have been expected even a year earlier, but on the other hand, past experience and current economic forecasts both suggest that the upsurge in American military spending will not be sustained for more than a few years. That, to be sure, would suffice to deprive the Soviet Union of a great part of the gains it achieved in the military competition during the 1970s, but the relative position of the Soviet Union would still show a very great improvement as compared to, say, 1967.

Just as it did in the nineteen-sixties, when the United States was moving ahead in many areas of the military competition, the Soviet Union could now keep up its own armament effort, and rely on the superior tenacity of the long-lived Kremlin leaders to overcome eventually the effects of the temporary American upsurge. Similarly, the Soviet Union could count on the continuing growth of its power to dissolve the fragile alliances that were engendered by its past military growth. For the upkeep of alliances against a rising threat will only persist if that threat falls within a middle range. If the threat is small, there will obviously be no sufficient reason to overcome all the natural diversities that pull allies apart, but if the threat is so great that any attempt at a joint defense seems futile, then too the alliance will collapse. In that circumstance diplomatic

conciliation -- that is appeasement -- will seem the wiser choice, certainly less costly and perhaps less dangerous also.

Counting on the inconsistency of the great and ever-turbulent American democracy, and on its readiness to turn away from activism overseas to domestic concerns as soon as some foreign venture proves to be disappointing, the Kremlin leaders may persevere in their long-term military program and in their foreign policy which seeks, as always, to separate the United States from its allies, clients and friends.

By the classic paradox of strategy the new American effort to restore a tolerable balance of military power which should eventually consolidate the alliance offers in the meantime great opportunities for Soviet diplomacy to divide the alliance. If the United States remains firm in its intent, and if it is successful in its major military programs and if the alliances are kept together in the interim, then a reconstructed balance of power will emerge by the end of the 1980s, in which the Soviet advantage in land power will once again be offset by the strength on land of cohesive allies and by American (and allied) advantages in strategic-nuclear and naval capabilities. It was on that asymmetry that the overall military balance of the entire post-war era was based, and it was the

decline of American strength at sea and in strategic-nuclear forces that destabilized the balance of military power during the nineteen-seventies.

The opportunity for Soviet diplomacy to divide the United States from its allies arises because allies made insecure by the diminished strength of their protector must now be exposed to all the stresses of the new policy of rearmament even while being still in the state of weakness created by the American policies of the recent past. So long as the Western Alliance was drifting gently into an increasing weakness, with Soviet-American arms control talks underway to relieve anxiety and offer hopes of a costless stability, the Alliance could be as comfortable as a patient drifting into a coma under heavy sedation. Now the patient is being told to rise and work, and all the unfelt wounds inflicted in the past begin to hurt.

Insofar as the American rearmament is strategic-nuclear, it raises the fear that the Soviet Union will be tempted to exploit its present advantage to make permanent gains, before the advent of newly powerful American strategic-nuclear forces imposes once again the full restraints of deterrence upon Soviet conduct. Insofar as the American rearmament is "conventional", it must impose increased defense costs on the allies as well, since in some degree or other they each will have to make their gestures towards sharing the burden. As for rearmament

in the middle category of forces, the tactical and "theater" nuclear weapons, that places a special stress on the politics of the European allies because in being forced to think of those weapons they are confronted by the strategic predicament that they strive so greatly to forget: an alliance which relies for its protection more on deterrence than on defense obtains security more cheaply, but at a correspondingly greater risk of catastrophe. In due course, the fruits of the new American policy should greatly reassure European opinion, but in the meantime costs, risks and stresses all increase -- while the benefits of added security are not yet forthcoming.

If the Soviet leaders were still optimistic about the long-term future of their system they could therefore see advantageous prospects in Europe, and elsewhere too for that matter. In East Asia, the fundamental poverty of China guarantees an equally fundamental military weakness, and this in turn keeps open the possibility of forcing by threats a reversal of Chinese policy, from hostility to conciliation. Certainly there is no solid base of security for Chinese foreign policy, which constantly affronts and provokes the Soviet Union even while having no adequate shield of deterrence or defense. In the meantime, the basic conditions that make Chinese politics so unstable will continue in being. Optimistic Soviet observers may thus calculate that sooner or later a leadership less ill-disposed to the Soviet Union will emerge in Peking, if only because the present opening to the West entails cultural intrusions

that must in some degree erode the very foundations of China's totalitarianism.

Soviet leaders who were still optimistic could also see ample opportunities in the rest of East Asia, for each country of that region is poor or insecure or internally unstable, or all of those things. Japan is the exception but even in her case it is clear enough that the continued industrial evolution of that country on present lines is unlikely, for it would eventually lead to the elimination of the entire industry of the United States and Western Europe-- a thing most unlikely to be tolerated. And it is only the Soviet Union that offers an alternative as a potential large-scale buyer of both consumer and producer goods, in exchange for raw materials, including perhaps oil and gas re-exported from the Middle East.

And so the survey could go on, from country to country and region to region to find everywhere causes of weakness and disarray which afford scope for a Soviet diplomacy which offers security and support to its clients and which presents a many-sided threat to those who resist its offer.

But to sustain optimism about the long-term competition with the United States and about the international scene more generally, the Soviet leadership must first remain optimistic about the future of its own system. Mankind has a great capacity to remain in a state of optimism even in circumstances most adverse, but it is difficult to see how the successors of the present gerontocracy that rules the Kremlin will be able to remain optimistic about the future of the regime. The Soviet

economy is perceptibly falling behind, and the entire demographic base is changing in a way which is ultimately incompatible with the continued Russian domination.

The members of the gerontocracy now still in power may be excused if they fail to see what lies ahead for the Soviet system. The old men of the Kremlin who can look back on the astonishing rise of Soviet fortunes must find it very hard to see the future in a gloomy light. Their very long careers began during the grim terror of the purges; they survived the sinister tragedy of Hitler's war, in which the fortunate among the Soviet population survived in extreme misery and semi-starvation, while those less fortunate died by the million. Most who must vividly remember the phenomenal hardships of those years can hardly be greatly worried by the diminishing rate of increase in Soviet per-capita consumption.* Men who lived through the days when German guns could be heard in the streets of Moscow will scarcely be alarmed by the danger of some fractional increase in Belgian defense budgets nor even by the greater fact that the Soviet Union now confronts an emerging Sino-American alliance in addition to the old Euro-American alliance. Nor will men who once solved nationality problems by deporting entire peoples see much to fear even in the relentless demographic change that is

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* 5% annual growth over 1966-70, but only 2.9% in 1971-75 and less than that in the years since. U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, "The Soviet Economy in a Time of Change," Volume 1, October 10, 1979, Table 4, p. 768.

steadily increasing the proportion of the most intractable nationalities. Above all, old men who have seen the Soviet economy recover from the devastation of a war unusually destructive to yield a modest prosperity, as well as a spectacular growth in armaments are unlikely to be greatly alarmed by obscure phenomena such as the declining rate of growth of labor productivity.

But harsh facts ignored do not disappear, and the ills of the Soviet economy and of Soviet society are becoming steadily more acute. As the products which the Soviet economy must produce become more varied and more complex, as innovation imposes change at an accelerating rate, central planning in the Soviet style accomplished by mandatory production quotas is less and less effective. That much was already publicly acknowledged by authorized Soviet economic experts as long as two decades ago; since then, there have been many administrative reforms, and all sorts of incentive schemes but those efforts have failed, since the central-planning mechanism ("Gosplan") remains the economy's controlling brain. Soviet economic experts certainly know full well by now that dynamic entrepreneurship and efficient management (the missing elements) cannot coexist with planning that specifies very exactly all output targets, and all prices. It is obvious enough that the system cannot provide a sufficient reward for the dynamic entrepreneur, or the efficient manager; it is the obedient administrator who lives best

in the world that planning makes, and that is what the system gets.

We may therefore be sure that if the Gosplan's mandatory planning system has not been abolished it is for a very good reason, namely that the Party's power-structure requires its preservation. So long as the official ideology remained a strong force in Soviet life, the party's mass of middle-ranking officials could be well employed as the keepers and teachers of the ideology. But in the modern Soviet Union the official ideology is no longer a live body of guiding ideas, in constant need of reinterpretation and propagation. Now fossilized, Marxism-Leninism has become instead an official religion since its propositions have become dogmas; Soviet Marxism-Leninism now has its ceremonies, rituals and idols, chiefly the figure of Lenin himself -- whose bust presides over all schoolrooms, offices and places of public assembly. But if the ideology has become dogmatic religion, the party could not likewise become a priesthood. The tens of thousands of officials who make up the base of the party's power-structure could only retain their importance by finding non-ideological roles for themselves, and they have in the economy. It is they who are the directors of factories and farms, the managers of wholesale agencies and retain shops, the heads of service enterprises, design bureaus, and research centers; and then of course they fill the ranks of the gigantic economic bureaucracy, with its double structure of "all-Union" and republic ministries.

Some of those men and women are no doubt talented professionals, eager to emulate the best of Western standards, who

would much prefer to be free to act on their own instead of being captive to the central-planning process. But many more, inevitably, are essentially political hacks who have risen to managerial status because of their standing in the party. For them, the plan is not an unwelcome straightjacket but rather the essential guarantee of their ability to cope. Since they lack the talents of the entrepreneur, since they could not possibly be efficient as managers, their professional survival depends on the preservation of the present system, which rewards the obedient administrator, which gives only small incentives for efficiency, and which offers no compensation for the risks that the true entrepreneur must face.

Since the entire power-structure of the Soviet Union is based on the allegiance of the mass of middle-ranking officials, it is the imperative priority of regime survival that prohibits any drastic economic reform. And yet without a liberalization true and wide, there can be no escape from the circumstances that result in the declining effectiveness of the Soviet economy. Actually superior to any free-enterprise system in a warlike environment, in which the goal is the supply of a few essentials for civilians and the maximal output of a fully specified range of products for the armed forces; still able to sustain military innovation in all circumstances, (the aviation design bureaus, for example, operate in a competitive fashion), the Soviet economy becomes less and less effective as its setting is further and further removed from that of a war economy.

[illegible] in the relative effectiveness of the Soviet economy will simply continue. It is not that its total output

will decline or even fail to keep up with, say, the American GNP but rather that its output will consist more and more of the wrong products, that is outdated products -- a phenomenon long manifest in sectors of rapid innovation, such as computer technology or female fashions.

This being the case, the regime's increasing reliance on the appeal of Russian nationalism is politically the right course to follow -- at least in the short term -- because it is precisely the Russians who must feel the greatest sense of economic deprivation, since they compare themselves with Western Europeans. The increasing proportion of Central Asians must by contrast feel the least sense of relative deprivation, since they compare themselves to their counterparts across the near borders in Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and China. But in the long run, it is inevitable that the license given to Russian nationalism will stimulate the responsive self-assertion of the other nationalities, including the Central Asian nations, and this will erode the very basis of Soviet legitimacy.

A more immediate link between the nationalities question and the economic problem is the increasing role of Central Asians in the labor force, which imposes a dilemma between bringing Central Asian workers into the established centers of industry -- with the certainty of thereby increasing ethnic frictions -- and the building of new industries in Central Asia, which would entail the greater long-run risk of in-

to channel new investments to Soviet Central Asia would assure the decline of the Russian-dominated centers of established

industry, a course that must be politically unacceptable to a Russian-based regime.

As the old men now in power give way to new leaders (who may be just as old by the time they attain the highest offices) the complex of internal problems facing the new Soviet leadership may seem deceptively similar to the economic and demographic problems now so vividly manifest in the West, namely slow growth, the "guest-worker" problem of Europe, illegal immigration for the United States, and the decline of the traditional industries of the northeast United States, Belgium, northeast France, Britain, and the Ruhr. The very great difference is that in the Soviet case the imperatives of regime survival deny "natural" solutions which, however painfully, lead to a gradual adjustment of economy and society.

If the new leaders of the Soviet Union are already possessed of a whole battery of novel ideas until now concealed from us; or, alternatively, if they are willing to carry out a whole new revolution by disestablishing the party from the economy, and restoring trans-nationalism in word and deed, they remain optimistic. Otherwise, it is difficult to imagine how they can view the long-term future of the Soviet system with confidence.

Military Optimism and its Consequences

In what follows, the long-term pessimism of the next generation of Kremlin leaders is not assumed as fact but merely put forward as theory. Quite separately, it is argued that --

also for the first time -- Soviet leaders old and new have operational confidence in their armed forces, specifically that they now have good reason to believe that the Soviet armed forces can execute offensive operations with speed and precision, to win clean victories in short order against a variety of potential enemies in a variety of settings -- so long as the risk of a nuclear reaction by the victim is low, and the Soviet forces themselves would not need to employ nuclear weapons to accomplish their goals. This great change alone suffices to increase the risk of war by choice, which is inherent in a great military empire that may rightly see itself as encircled by enemies, some of which are very vulnerable.

But to the extent that the notion of long-term regime pessimism is accepted, a correspondingly higher estimate must be made of the risks that the leaders of the Soviet Union might accept in their never-ending quest for total security. For it is notorious that the conjunction of a long-term regime pessimism with current military optimism is the classic condition that makes deliberate war more likely. Even in the presence of tempting opportunities leaders optimistic about the long-term future of their regime will not willingly choose to go to war, because they expect that their strength will only become greater in the future. That of course was the condition of the Soviet Union until very recently. Again, leaders who lack confidence in the ability of their armed forces to carry out offensive operations reliably and well, will not start wars either; rare indeed is the leader who chooses to go to war by

deliberate choice fully expecting that the struggle will be costly, long and of uncertain result. But when leaders are pessimistic about the long-term future of their regimes and at the same time they have high confidence in the strength and ability of their armed forces, then all that they know, and all that they fear will conspire to induce them to use their military power while it still retains its presumed superiority. Only thus can today's strength be exploited to improve an unfavorable future. To convert a transitory military advantage into a permanent gain of security for the regime, there must be some profitable war in prospect. Profitable wars were rare even before the nuclear age, but once the urgency to act before it is too late is strongly felt, men will easily persuade themselves of the high likelihood of victory, of its small cost, and of its great benefits. It was under such a pressure that Germany accepted the Hapsburg call to go to war in 1914, and an unfavorable future was Hitler's best justification for going to war in 1939 -- although characteristically it was his own mortality that Hitler invoked to explain the urgency of war. More seriously, it was the gloomy prospect of the loss of empire, in conjunction with high military confidence (and a fatal misreading of the American temper) that drove the Japanese to their Pearl Harbor decision in 1941.

Quite naturally, the opinions of most Western observers of Soviet conduct were formed on the basis of the Soviet Union that was perhaps expansionist, but essentially non-aggressive and, above all, always prudent. That indeed was the conduct that could be expected from a regime that both optimistic of its long-run future and also skeptical of its current military strength. It is understandable that this opinion should persist:

to confuse prudence imposed by circumstances with restraint inherent in the very nature of the regime is easy enough since the conditions that made the Soviet leaders greatly reluctant to accept risks persisted for so long, year after year, decade after decade. But if the theory of regime pessimism and the further claim that the Soviet leaders now have operational confidence in their armed forces are both accepted, it follows directly that a radically different pattern of Soviet external conduct is now unfolding before us -- a pattern in which the invasion of Afghanistan already belongs.

Many intellectual reputations and much political capital is invested in the notion of a Soviet Union fundamentally non-aggressive. We must therefore suspect the eagerness with which many specialists invented ad hoc explanations to reconcile the invasion of Afghanistan with their model of a defensive and prudent Soviet Union. In the perspective of eternity such opinions may of course turn out to have been right -- and not merely in the trivial sense that all expansion can always be explained away as prudential and defensive; but it is here argued that they are wrong, and indeed that the new phase of Soviet imperial strategy had emerged several years before the invasion of Afghanistan. The debate must continue but the possibility that Soviet conduct is being considered on the basis of outdated assumptions should at least be seriously considered.

IV. THE TOOLS OF SOVIET POWER, MILITARY AND NOT

Over the last thirty years, we have witnessed great political and economic changes that should have resulted in the consolidation of a decisive Western military superiority over the Soviet Union: the dissolution of the Russo-Chinese alliance, the post-war recovery of Western Europe and Japan, and the emergence of a dozen newly successful industrial societies firmly in the American camp in a great arc from Norway to South Korea. While the Soviet Union lost the Chinese military alliance and has gained only Cuba as a satellite and Vietnam as an ally, as well as such lesser clients as South Yemen, the United States gained the effective alliance of West Germany, Italy and Japan, of a dozen smaller countries which had only token military forces thirty years ago, and most recently it has gained also a measure of Chinese cooperation.

But all these favorable changes have been offset by the spectacular growth of Soviet military power, the product of an armament effort of entirely unprecedented dimensions. As a result, the Soviet Union almost alone now presents a far more formidable threat to Western security than the "Sino-Soviet" bloc of the nineteen-fifties ever did. Systematic and cumulative, the Soviet accumulation of military strength transcends by far in scope and duration the pre-war German mobilization, or for that matter the wartime build-ups of Britain and the United States. Hitler's preparations for war lasted for only five years, and the wartime German effort for only another six years after that; the British war mobilization did not truly begin until 1940, and the American was even shorter. The Soviet armaments program has not of course been conducted at levels of wartime intensity, but on the other hand it has continued in one form or another for more than thirty years.

Between 1945 and 1950, while the United States and Britain were demobilizing troops, laying up warships and sending thousands of aircraft to the scrap-yard while their military research-and-development barely kept going under miniscule budgets, the Soviet Union launched a crash nuclear-weapon program, several major rocket and missile projects,

and laid the keels of many submarines and quite a few oceanic cruisers (the Sverdlovs).

From the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950 until 1954, the steady Soviet program was overtaken by the sudden upsurge of American (and British) military spending prompted by the war and by the fear that it was only a prelude to an attack upon Western Europe. But as soon as the pressure of the immediate crisis waned, the United States relaxed its efforts and returned to business as usual, while in the Soviet Union the build-up of military power continued unabated: the revolutionary new weapons, nuclear-armed rockets and the first ballistic missiles were featured prominently, but actually there was innovation in almost all the military forces.

By 1959, the "Missile-Gap" crisis brought about a combination of inadequate American intelligence and Soviet deception had stimulated another brief American surge in spending, at first rather narrowly focused on strategic-nuclear weapons; but it did not last beyond 1964. Once again, the Soviet Union did not emulate the American upsurge, and once again it did not follow the American downturn. Instead, during a fifteen-year period in which American military resources were consumed by the Indochina war, and then drastically reduced by budgetary reductions, the Soviet Union continued to increase its net investment in military power at a steady rate.*

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* The amounts allocated in American defense budgets for investment (equipment purchases, research, development and testing, and military construction) declined steadily in absolute terms during the entire period from the mid-1960s until 1976. It was only then that the trend was reversed but only rather slowly:

Footnote, continued

in real terms (deflated dollars) the 1964 level of military investment (roughtly eight billion in 1983 dollars) was not attained again until 1983.

The most vividly manifest and quite incontrovertible result of these divergent trends in Soviet and American military investment is that the total stock of Soviet military equipment has grown to the point where it exceeds in quantity the combined inventories of the United States, the rest of NATO and the People's Republic of China in every category of armaments except for surface naval vessels, small arms and a few lesser items. Further, the once wide qualitative advantages of Western weapons over their Soviet counterparts have diminished to the point where they are of very small military significance, once the totality of the forces that would interact in battle is taken into account. Now that the habit of comparing late-model Western weapons, present only in sample quantities, with Soviet weapons already in mass deployment has finally fallen into disrepute, Soviet numerical superiorities must now be accepted as superiorities tout court.

Less obvious and incapable of any numerical definition is the ultimately far more important change in the nature of Soviet military power which has been brought about by the great improvement in the competence of the Soviet officer corps. Since 1945 the expertise originally gained in combat by the survivors of an officer corps that had entered the war cruelly unprepared has been systematized and kept up to date by a most ambitious scheme of officer education. The Soviet armed forces operate 125 [sic] military colleges with five-year programs, 16 military academies which offer advanced courses, and there are seven specialized military institutes.*

The fact that young men gather in classrooms does not necessarily mean that they learn; and what can be learned in classrooms does not necessarily yield competence on the battlefield. And of course it is true that Soviet forces have not waged war on a large scale or against serious opponents since 1945. But our recent glimpses of the Soviet officer corps at work in Ethiopia and in Afghanistan suggest that the thirty-five years of concentrated Soviet effort have indeed produced results. Quite independently, we also have reason to believe that the political leaders at the summit of the Kremlin hierarchy now have confidence in the ability of their armed forces to carry out complicated offensive operations swiftly and successfully. The invasion of Czechoslovakia was a heavy-handed mass operation in the old Russian style; but the high-speed seizure of Kabul in December 1979

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*William E. Odom, "Whither the Soviet Union," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 1981, p. 42.

Usually we focus our attention on the current state of the Soviet armed forces, and even more on their future evolution. But to try to understand the self-image and expectations of today's Soviet leaders, military as well as political, it is helpful to recall how drastic the advancement of their power has been over the last generation. If we take 1951 as our initial year of comparison, in that year the Soviet Union had no oceanic surface navy at all; it did have some submarines but they could not hope to operate effectively astride the North Atlantic sea lanes of the Western alliance and Soviet naval aviation had no long-range aircraft capable of strike missions. While the inventory of submarines was already large, it consisted mainly of small coastal defense boats, and the character of the Soviet surface fleet and naval air force was even more markedly defensive. As of this writing, Soviet naval power is incomparably greater: the Soviet submarine force can operate in all oceans of the world and its weapons are sufficiently powerful to threaten not only merchant shipping but even the strongest naval task-forces. The Soviet surface fleet can now fight offensively, so long as it remains under land-based air cover, but even with this limitation it can support submarine operations, by challenging American anti-submarine forces attempting to interdict the "choke-points" through which Soviet submarines must pass. In addition, the Soviet surface fleet has also become an effective instrument of the Kremlin's foreign policy, serving as a "presence" and suasion force active world-wide. Soviet naval aviation has also acquired a strategic reach, especially since the introduction of the naval version of the "Backfire" bomber which [illegible] both a long range and high [illegible]

Until the great transformation of Soviet naval power, the oceans of the world had been the safe rear of the American alliance system. While the continental allies of Europe and South Korea could be directly threatened by overland invasion, the "islands," Britain, NorthAmerica and Japan, as well as Australia, were immune from attack except for a still very small Soviet nuclear threat. The oceanic connection between the American core and the allies on the rimlands of Europe and Asia was quite secure from Soviet naval interdiction. Now all this has changed. Quite apart from its nuclear delivery capacity of huge dimensions and global reach, the Soviet Union can now also threaten sea lanes of communication that link the United States to its rimland allies, and those which connect the sources of raw materials of the Middle East and Africa to both. The alliance thus no longer has a safe rear, and the possible interdiction of maritime communications undercuts the value of the American logistic base for the allies.

Even in 1951, the Soviet Union, China and the European satellite air forces had a large number of tactical combat aircraft, including several thousand jet fighters and several hundred light bombers. But the qualitative gap between Soviet and Western air forces was still very wide. Aside from superior aircraft and weapons, both the American and British air forces had the advantage of highly-trained combat pilots with recent wartime experience; the Soviet air force had also fought in the

recent world war but the quality of its pilots had remained very low till the end by the standards of the Luftwaffe. Western tactical air forces were capable of mounting powerful ground-strike operations, both for close support and for interdiction. The Soviet air force did include good close-support aircraft, but it lacked both the experience and the equipment to be effective in those missions; its higher quality aircraft were limited primarily to air-combat. In other words, Soviet tactical airpower was largely defensive in character.

In 1951 Western tactical airpower had been the great compensating factor in the land-warfare balance as a whole. In combat with Soviet forces, outnumbered Western ground troops could count on a virtual immunity from air attack and on much positive air support of high quality. That too has now changed. The Soviet air forces have greatly diminished the qualitative gap between the respective first-line forces. While Western air forces have a small number of late-model aircraft with a sharp advantage in quality over the mass of Soviet aircraft of the prior generation, the bulk of Western combat aircraft is much closer in quality to their Soviet counterparts. Although the West does retain an advantage in all the ancillaries critical to combat capability (missiles and other air ordnance, as well as avionics), the Soviet Union has also made much progress and the gap is narrowing steadily. Much the same applies to the infrastructure of airfields, maintenance support and ground-based radar and control systems. Only in presumed pilot quality is the West

still ahead; obviously we cannot know how good pilots really are, but we do know that Soviet pilots fly much less and receive less varied training.

But the most important change in the balance of airpower is the decline in the net value of Western air-to-ground capabilities. The Soviet Union has developed and mass-produced a whole variety of air defense missiles from man-portable SAM-7s to high-altitude SAM-2s, with several low- and medium-altitude surface-to-air missiles mounted on cross-country vehicles in the middle of the spectrum. In addition, Soviet ground forces include large numbers of anti-aircraft guns. From the evidence of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war we know that these weapons really do work, and very well.

In their sheer number, their overlapping coverage, and the considerable technical sophistication of all these anti-aircraft weapons greatly reduces the ability of Western air forces to help in the ground battle. Quite aside from actual intercepts, the array of Soviet air defenses on the battlefield would force Western aircraft to fly difficult evasion courses at low altitudes, would force them to employ standoff weapons that are scarce, and in general to devote so much effort to their own self-protection that the net capability available for attack is much reduced. Western ground forces can no longer expect to be immune to attack, and neither can they rely on prompt, accurate and heavy support from the air.

Of course even in 1951, the ground forces of the Soviet Union greatly outnumbered those of the United States and its allies, while any East-West compairson that included the mass of infantry of the Chinese army would show a huge, though not very

meaningful imbalance. But the Soviet advantage on the ground was offset by the absolute advantage of U.S. and British tactical airpower, and by the unchallenged superiority of the United States in nuclear-weapon delivery. Now by contrast, all the countervailing Western advantages have either disappeared or else have become of small import while the Soviet army remains the superior force on the ground; it can effectively threaten NATO with invasion while the Soviet Union on the other hand is virtually immune from a NATO offensive on the ground.

Structured and deployed for the offensive, amply equipped with modern weapons of good quality, and trained in a realistic manner, the Soviet army also has a very great hidden advantage over its NATO counterparts: training, equipment and organization are all shaped by a coherent operational scheme for deep-penetration armored warfare which is intended to cut through the NATO frontage, disrupt its defensive array and encircle the forces that have not retreated. This operational scheme exploits the full potential of the Pact's all-mechanized armies and it is fully consistent with the twin Soviet political goals of repressing Eastern Europe and intimidating Western Europe. The NATO ground forces by contrast have no coherent operational scheme for a defense-in-depth; instead they would form a thin linear deployment of the

sort most easily defeated by concentrated, "mailed fist", armored thrusts. From the Baltic to the Austrian frontier, NATO's front in Germany would amount to a cordon of German, Belgian, Dutch, British and American divisions deployed flank against flank just across the frontier. In Greece too there is no geographic depth and the NATO front opposite Bulgaria would amount to a thin strip between the mountains and the sea. Only in Norway and Turkey does the NATO defense have some real geographic depth, and not by choice: it is simply that the Norwegian frontier in the far north and the Turkish frontier in the Caucasus happen to be thinly populated and remote from the main centers of population.

The Soviet army of 1951 was already well equipped in the major weapons such as tanks, assault guns and towed artillery, but it was short of everything else, from trucks and jeeps to field radios. The major weapons were of excellent design for the time even if crudely built, but other equipment, including small arms, was of poor quality. Thus the Soviet army of 1951 could only have fought as it did during the Second World War itself, by combining set-piece artillery barrages (fired from great numbers of towed pieces laboriously assembled) with the thrusts of massed tanks, with the infantry following in turn to clear and occupy ground already won. Such means did defeat

the Germans, but they could allow only a ponderous, step-by-step advance which was very costly in casualties, and which would have been dangerously sl w against an enemy rich in airpower.

Nowadays by contrast it is precisely the Soviet army that has the fullest range of weapons and the model array of ancillary equipment for every need. Even the best-equipped of Western armies, that is the West German and the American, fall short of the Soviet standard, with the former lacking for example in chemical-warfare equipment, while the latter is only now acquiring its first combat carriers for the infantry. And it is the Soviet army that now has the advantage of deploying complete families of weapons that offer overlapping capabilities in each category.*

In 1951, the Soviet infantry would have gone to the front on foot, on horse-carts or at best in commercial-type trucks; now it is equipped with armored combat carriers of three different types, one wheeled and lightly armed for the motorized-rifle divisions, one heavily armed and fully tracked for the tank divisions, and a much lighter tracked vehicle for the airborne divisions. As for the ancillaries, Soviet tactical radios are now of Western quality and just as widely distributed while chemical-warfare weapons and defenses are far more comprehensive than in any Western army. Soviet engineer equipment is notoriously

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* E.g., for anti-armor use: shoulder-fired RPGs, longer-ranged recoilless weapons, and several types of man-portable and vehicular anti-tank missiles; for fire support: light, medium and heavy mortars in addition to howitzers, gun-howtizers and guns in medium and heavy calibers as well as mobile multiple rocket-launchers of varied range and warhead-weight; and for ground air defense: heavy machine-guns, radar-guided cannons and several classes of mobile AA missiles, some mounted on tracked launchers.

superior and includes specialized items that are simply absent in Western armies such as mobile automatic trench-diggers and ribbon-bridges. Until the mid-seventies the American army at least remained superior in one class of weapons: armed helicopters; by now, however, even this one remaining advantage has gone.

What all this tells us, quite simply, is that today's Soviet army is as different from the brute-force army of 1945 as the latter differed in turn from the bewildered troops which the Germans defeated by the million in 1941 and 1942. Continuously supported by self-propelled artillery and accompanied by armored infantry, Soviet tank assaults would no longer need to stop after each successful thrust to allow the infantry and the towed artillery to catch up. Instead of ponderous step-by-step offensives, separated by weeks and months of laborious preparation, the Soviet army could now mount a continuous offensive that would persist by day and by night till its goal is reached. Instead of "steamroller" offensives on pre-planned lines of advance, whose rigidity was no less pronounced than their mass, the Soviet army is now capable of fluid maneuver, so that an enemy's tactical success in stopping this or that thrust of advance would merely result in his subsequent encirclement. It is this formidable combination of "Russian" mass and "German" operational quality that characterizes today's Soviet army.

Along with its greatly enhanced capacity for continental warfare on a large scale, today's Soviet army has also acquired intervention capabilities wholly absent in the past. In conjunction with long-range air transport, KGB operatives, and the forces of Soviet clients such as Cuba, the airborne divisions and special air-assault brigades of the Soviet army are now equipped and trained to mount a wide spectrum of special operations, from the infiltration of small diversionary units to full-scale airborne coup de main assaults that can encompass an entire country. Such fine-tuned operations would have been quite beyond the capacity of the Soviet army of 1951, or 1961 for that matter, since one cannot rely on massed firepower and large numbers when surprise and stealth are absolute requirements. We have to construe the abilities of the Soviet army in continental warfare from what we know of Soviet doctrine, exercises, field maneuvers, officer training, and equipment; but in recent years we have been afforded several opportunities to estimate how well the Soviet army performs as an intervention force, and our estimate cannot be optimistic.

For all its shortcomings even in 1951 the Soviet army could have defeated any enemy it could then encounter in continental warfare. But this potential superiority in ground warfare did not offer any practical war-making opportunities to the leaders of the Soviet Union even if they had been so inclined because America's superiority in "strategic" air-bombardment could then nullify any Soviet victories on the ground. When Stalin

imposed his land blockade upon West Berlin, the deadly embrace of the Soviet army around the city was sufficient to force the suspension of all overland communications. But when the United States and Britain responded by mounting the airlift, the Soviet Union did not feel free to risk an air war by intercepting their aircraft. The great superiority of the United States in strategic air bombardment and nuclear weapons could not avert the crisis, nor decide its outcome all by itself, but it did set the rules of the encounter by providing an invisible but fully effective mantle of protection for all those heavily-loaded transports that flew unharmed into West Berlin right over the Soviet anti-aircraft guns that ringed the city.

The Soviet Union was already a nuclear power in 1951, our year of comparison: it had both fission bombs and a long-range bomber (the Tu-4, a Soviet copy of the wartime American B-29). In fact the Soviet air force had several hundred Tu-4s which in theory could reach targets in the continental United States from bases in the Soviet arctic. For the United States, too, the sole means of nuclear delivery was then the manned bomber. Ostensibly, American and Soviet bomber forces were thus roughly comparable. The Strategic Air Command of the U.S. Air Force relied on B-50s which were modernized B-29s just like the Tu-4, as well as on B-36 bombers (larger but not much more effective); only a few B-47 jet bombers were already operational. But the similarity between Soviet and American bomber forces was entirely deceptive: the American force had the training and the on-board electronics to fly to the Soviet Union, find its targets, bomb them with tolerable accuracy, and survive against Soviet fighter-interceptors along the way. It had been the discovery of the early years of the Second World War that bombers were almost entirely useless without special skills and equipment for navigation and aiming. In 1951 the Soviet air force still lacked those attributes and Tu-4s flying in American airspace in search of worthwhile targets would probably have run out of fuel or fallen victims to interception before reaching any American cities to drop their bombs.

By the early 1980, on the other hand, the United States had lost the strategic-nuclear advantage that the superior economic, scientific and technological abilities of American society should naturally have assured. Outnumbered in every

category of "strategic" weapon except bombers, and outmatched in every conceivable index of capability except in the number of warheads (a rapidly waning advantage), American strategic-nuclear forces have much less delivery capacity as of this writing than the Soviet(unless theoretical bomber payloads are misleadingly treated on a par with actual missile throw-weights). The long-standing American advantage in missile accuracies has also largely disappeared by 1981. Uniquely, the outcome of the strategic-nuclear competition was not determined by the usual asymmetry between a steady Soviet effort and American inconstancy. It was by deliberate policy that the United States allowed its once great advantage to wane, and this policy was not dictated by budgetary stringencies but was rather the result of a pervasively influential and dogmatic belief in the theory of "Assured Destruction", which held that no advantage could be gained by any level of strategic-nuclear capability in excess of what was needed to destroy reliably a certain proportion of Soviet population (unless and until the much higher level required for a fully disarming counterforce strike was reached -- but that was a level universally deemed to be unattainable in practice).

The theory of "mutual deterrence" which guided American strategic-nuclear policy during fifteen years of unilateral restraint is ingenious and intellectually appealing. But what made it irresistable was that it offered a low-cost and low-risk solution to the great competition for power and influence with the Soviet Union. Thus the Soviet Union was allowed to acquire margins of advantage in one dimension of strategic-nuclear

ineluctably changed, since the adverse trend in those forces was

not offset by compensating changes in naval, tactical-air or ground-force capabilities. And the change in the balance of military power was just as inevitably reflected in the real-world political balance of access and influence. For all the intellectual plausibility of the American theory of deterrence, the Soviet Union showed that the universal rule of strategy still applies: one may not unilaterally quit the competition without penalty, and there is no such thing as cost-free competition.

While the West is weak in military power, the Soviet empire remains weak in economic achievement. It is sometimes claimed that in this divergence there is an overall balance. In fact, during the years when the military position of the United States and its allies continued to deteriorate, those who opposed a corrective build-up would stress the importance of "economic power" and technical superiority, arguing in effect that the two are effective substitutes for military strength. But it is only in a protracted war that economic resources and technical abilities can in fact be substituted by the mobilization of economy and society. Given a sufficiently long war, the United States and its allies could no doubt eventually muster superior military forces and thus achieve a superior overall power -- if, that is, populations and industries survive until then.

But in the presence of thermonuclear weapons the potential military power that economic superiority can provide is worth very much less than forces in being actually deployed. Potential military power is of use to fight a war, if long enough; only military forces actually deployed can prevent war, by deterrence unless a capacity for protracted war is made credible, by elaborate preparations to bridge the mobilization gap. It follows that reliance on "economic power" implies a war-fighting strategy, while a war-avoidance strategy by contrast requires deployed military forces.

Of course the relative importance of economic and military power must also be evaluated in terms of their diplomatic worth,

in the absence of war or the imminence of war. Some argue that the awesome destructive capacity of nuclear weapons inhibits the use of military power to such a great extent that even a large superiority cannot yield worthwhile gains; they therefore claim that military power itself is of declining importance in the affairs of mankind. In the same vein, it is argued that in a world that has made development and growth a universal religion, economic power is a highly flexible diplomatic instrument -- altogether more useful than military force in providing influence over the course of international politics. The argument is plausible but it rests on a basic misconception, since armed strength need not be manifest in actual warfare to yield effective power.

As the relative power of a state increases in the perceptions of the world's political leaders and opinion-makers, its sphere of action that others deem proper and legitimate increases also. When we are confronted by a rising military power whose growth we do not match, for fear of the risk of war, or because we want to evade the economic sacrifice, or perhaps because our own means are simply too small, we come to terms psychologically with its increasing power by persuading ourselves that it will never be actually used, or at least that its possible aggressions will not hurt us directly. In 1951, or for that matter in 1961, the Soviet intervention in Ethiopia or the invasion of Afghanistan would have been regarded as outrageous intrusions.

Most likely, the Soviet leaders themselves would not have allowed their military men to dream of such adventures. But once the great increase in the armed strength of the Soviet Union was accomplished, its sphere of action was widened also -- so much so that many were the voices that eagerly offered justifications for the Soviet Union's conduct. Of the Ethiopian intrusion, it was said the Soviet Union was merely helping a legitimate government to protect its internationally-recognized frontiers; and this is of course an argument both factually true, and legally sound. But had the Soviet leaders chosen instead to support the Somali invasion of the Ogaden and the rebellion in Eritrea, the very same voices would no doubt have reminded us that the Ogaden had a population largely made up of ethnic Somalis, while Eritrea is of course inhabited by Eritreans, and that both peoples had long been oppressed by the Amharic Ethiopian government. The Soviet Union, they would have said, was merely upholding the principle of self-determination by supporting Somalis and Eritreans -- and this is of course a principle universally recognized, notably by the United States, ever since 1917. Similarly, in the case of Afghanistan a suitably expanded principle of self-defense has been invoked on behalf of the Soviet Union: supposedly, there was a threat to Soviet control of the Muslim republics of the USSR; supposedly, this threat emanated from the example of the Afghan rebellion against the Communist government in Kabul -- hence to suppress that rebellion was mere self-defense. It is thus that power conditions the minds of men. First comes the rising power and its use, then, after the fact, some principle or other can always be invoked to legitimize that which we did not dare to

oppose. Economic leverage, real enough in single cases, has no such subtle and pervasive effect.

What others are so eager to legitimize, the Soviet leaders can obviously contemplate with equanimity. To discern the consequences of the great increase in the relative military power of the Soviet Union, we must therefore begin by estimating as best we can its impact upon the Soviet leaders themselves -- both the old men still in power and the next lot of old men which is likely to follow them. Having made their career in the party at a time when the Soviet Union was already a Great Power but lacked the attributes of <u>global</u> power, since its strategic reach did not go much beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union itself, the Kremlin leaders now find themselves possessed of an oceanic navy, a powerful air force of intercontinental range, and of course of large strategic-nuclear forces of global reach. Having graduated into the higher leadership at a time when the Soviet Union was already a greater power than all others except for the United States -- but distinctly inferior to the latter -- they now find themselves leading the most powerful of all nations. The possession of great power is not of course a novelty for the rulers of the Kremlin, which after all has been the seat of empire for centuries. Two things, however, are quite new. One is a matter of physical capabilities, concrete and incontrovertible, namely the achievement of extra-continental military strength of large dimensions; the other is neither concrete nor certain, namely, the advent of a high degree of operational confidence in the skill of Soviet armed forces, and specifically in their ability to execute precisely complex operations in demanding circumstances.

The Advent of Operational Confidence

The claim here made is that the attitude of the Soviet leaders toward their own military power has undergone a crucial change which is likely to affect their entire conduct in international affairs. The evidence for this claim rests on the record of just two military operations neither of them large or especially difficult: the intervention in Ethiopia in which Soviet combat units did not even take part, and the invasion of Afghanistan, entirely accomplished by Soviet forces. In neither case did the Soviet Union face a competent enemy, but then again in neither case could mass be employed to compensate for any qualitative shortcomings. Both operations were instead characterized by bold, self-confident execution of the sort not previously associated with the Russian style of warfare.

In the case of Ethiopia the Soviet Union intervened to assist the new revolutionary rulers at a time when the territory they controlled had shrunk to little more than an enclave on the high plateau around the capital of Addis Ababa whose only overland links to the outside world were the railway lines to Assab and Djibuti -- the former frequently interrupted by sabotage, and the latter actually cut by the Somali invasion. Formally begun on September 2, 1977, when a Soviet-Ethiopian army-supply agreement was signed, the intervention unambiguously placed Soviet prestige at risk in seemingly desperate circumstances: Eritrea was then largely in rebel hands, Somali troops and

guerillas had conquered much of the Ogaden (and cut the railway to Djibuti), and local rebellions had broken out in much of the rest of the country. A small Soviet command team headed by a Lieutenant General managed nevertheless to swiftly organize a series of successful counter-strokes which expelled the Somalis from the Ogaden by March 1978. Shortly thereafter, Eritrea was recovered also. By November 20, 1978, when the Ethiopian ruler Lt. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam signed a twenty-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, his government was in full control of the entire territory of Ethiopia -- a victory that would have seemed impossible when the Russians first arrived on the scene just one year before.

Before dismissing the significance of the episode on the grounds that the Somalis were weak and the Eritreans even more so, consider what the Soviet commander on the spot, Lt. General V. I. Petrov, and his small staff had to achieve, and what obstacles they had to overcome. Petrov's victorious fighting force was made up of 15,000 Cubantroops, eight Ethiopian divisions and some 100,000 peasant militia with small arms and little training. For one thing, these disparate elements had to be coordinated in combat, across multiple language barriers. Secondly, the Ethiopians had never before used Soviet weapons so that the 1,000 Soviet advisors had to train the troops and also give them some rudimentary maintenance skills while combat was actually underway. Petrov himself had to exercise overall control through a joint Soviet-Cuban-Ethiopian command, and his

campaign had to begin in the midst of invasion and defeat.

The first obstacle was the unfavorable geography. The Russians were a long way from home, and the railway link to the sea was thin and insecure; even air transport was precariously dependent on the overflight of countries nominally opposed to the Soviet intervention. There was thus no possibility of redeeming failure by throwing in Soviet forces en masse. Secondly, the Russians sent to Ethiopia had to act decisively in the face of urgent danger without having any prior familiarity with the terrain and cultural milieu, in a country as different as could be from any within the realm of Russian experience.

The fact that the Soviet Union's political leaders were willing to make a clear and unambiguous commitment to the defense of revolutionary Ethiopia in circumstances so adverse, and with logistic links to precarious, is proof of a very high degree of confidence in the professional quality and versatility of their military men. Equally obvious is the bold self-confidence of the new kind of Russian military leader. Others less bold might have insisted on a prudent step-by-step campaign, which would start with the consolidation of the Ethiopian enclave around the one available port at Assab to be followed by counter-guerilla clearing operations to secure the railway line to Addis Ababa before launching any major counter-offensive. Instead Petrov launched the counter-stroke first, and left the reconquest of Eritrea till later. Others might have demanded much time to equip, train and reorganize Ethiopian forces before counter-attacking

but the Russians did all those things concurrently. Others would have required the prior gathering of vast stocks of supplies and all sorts of elaborate logistic arrangements before mounting serious offensive operations, but the Russians were willing to supply Ethiopian forces going into action straight from the ships and aircraft as they arrived, improvising all the way. This clearly was warfare in the style of Rommel rather than Oblomov, in the manner of the Germans at their best rather than of the Soviet army as we knew it, or for that matter of the American army in Southeast Asia.

Too little is known of the actual fighting that goes on in Afghanistan as of this writing to make a serious estimate of the Soviet performance in that colonial war; and of course the final outcome of the conflict must remain in doubt. But the initial Soviet invasion is quite sufficient to confirm the judgement that one must make on the basis of the Ethiopian intervention.

The conventional part of the invasion of Afghanistan was the Soviet drives along the Termex-Kunduz-Kabul road, and the Kushka-Herat road. Two "Motorized-Rifle" divisions were sent on each axis (360th MRD and 201st MRD to Kabul; 357th MRD and 66th MRD to Herat) and their parallel advance continued past Kabul to converge at Quandahar. The 15th tank division followed along the Herat road, possibly to act as an operational reserve for the Soviet command which apparently provided by the 40th Army Headquarters which were moved from Samarkand to Termez before the invasion...

By itself, the overland advance could not have seized Kabul swiftly enough to prevent some attempt at organized resistance. The Afghan leader, President Hafizullah Amin, could have tried to mount some sort ofdefense with such loyal troops as he had, possibly including the armed militia of his Khalq faction; he could certainly have called on the people at large to resist the invader, and more dangerously for the Russians, he could have appealed for foreign assistance. Although none of these things could actually have stopped the Soviet army, each would have added to the political price of the invasion. But Amin could do nothing because the first move of the Soviet invasion was an airborne coup de main* which suppressed any attempt at resistance.

On the night of December 27, 1979, elite Soviet airborne troops along with special MVD (or KGB?) assault detachments moved into Kabul from the airport, sabotaged the central telephone exchange (to cut off international calls), and seized the radio and television station as well as the presidential palace and other major government buildings. At the same time, the Darulaman palace, where Amin had recently taken refuge with a guard of loyal troops was attacked. After a short fight all resistance was defeated, and Amin was killed. On the next day, December 28, 1979, a new leader was given to the Afghans, Babrak Karmal, a former deputy Prime Minister delivered to Kabul in the baggage of the Soviet army.

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* Carried out by the 103rd Guards Airborne Division (supporting elements from the 105th and 104th Guards Abns), whose troops were airlifted directly into Kabul International Airport in roughly 150 (AN-12 and AN-22) transport flights.

The Afghan government and much of the military structure had of course been thoroughly subverted by the Russians long before the invasion. In any case, one would not expect much effective resistance to a surprise high-speed action from the fierce but primitive and chaotic Afghans. Nevertheless, in examining the details of the Soviet coup de main one is not reminded of past Soviet actions, but rather of German operations such as Otto Skorzeny's "Margarethe," in which Hungary's ruler, Admiral Horthy (who was by then eager for an armistice with the Russians) was overthrown and arrested on October 16, 1944, to be replaced with a German nominee after the successful seizure of the key centers of Budapest in circumstances very similar to those of the Kabul operation on December 27, 1979. Easy as such operations may appear in retrospect, the record of others in circumstances just as favorable tells us how easy it is to fail, and how hard it is to do a clean job. All the frictions of warfare are most strongly manifest when all must be done swiftly, when specific buildings and even specific rooms must be found and seized in a surprise action tightly coordinated in time and space. In Kabul in December 1979, as in Budapest in October 1944, small teams of soldiers had to find their way and quickly in a strange city and at night. Only the most careful training and the most precise control can prevent accidental encounters with hostile elements, or even fratricidal fighting; only timing exactly coordinated can preserve surprise as the assault teams go for their separate targets all over the city.

To do such things quickly and well was not in the Soviet repertoire, until quite recently. Even the 1968 coup de main mounted from Prague airport at the beginning of the invasion of Czechoslovakia was not of the quality shown in Kabul a decade later. The Czechs did not mount any fighting resistance at all and yet the Soviet assault teams in Prague failed to carry out their plan. Refugees later told stories of Russians wandering around the city in a state of confusion, with lists of addresses in their hands. And it is proven fact that the Soviet teams failed to arrest key figures, and could not locate the emergency radio stations of the Czech civil-defense, which came on the air almost immediately.

Although the Afghan armed forces could never have done much against an enemy so formidable as the Soviet, and although desertions and widespread Soviet subversion had further reduced what powers of resistance they might have had, the fact remains that the Soviet airborne troops sent on their own into Kabul airport could easily have been defeated, had the Afghan tank division deployed nearby intervened early enough, if only with a company or two. Had Afghan tanks reached the airport while the Soviet troops were still being flown in, a massacre could have ensued. Similarly, even forces very small could have blocked the Termez and Kunduz roads leading to Kabul, at least for a day or two, since the terrain greatly favors ambushes and sabotage; and any such delay in the overland link-up would have been very dangerous for the lightly-armed airborne troops. [illegible] are told that some of the KGB and Soviet military men already in

place had neutralized the Afghan tank division by sabotage and subversion just before the coup de main. If true, this means that the Soviet high command ordered the daring airborne entry on the basis of a promise that undercover work would avert all danger. A more cautious military leadership would not have been so easily satisfied. Others in their place might have called for massive air strikes on the tank division's base before being willing to send lightly-armed airborne troops into the depth of Afghanistan.

We are therefore confronted by clear evidence of an utterly novel boldness on the part of Soviet military leaders, and of an equally new confidence on the past of the Kremlin leaders in the professional competence of their military colleagues. The prudence that many observers recognized in the Soviet Union's conduct of the past owed much to the scant self-confidence of the Soviet military, and perhaps even more to the skeptical reserve of the Kremlin towards its own armed forces and their claims. Now that boldness and an economical elegance of means characterizes Soviet military operations, it is natural that a more confident and far less prudent external policy should also be in evidence.

The Decline of Soviet Ideological Influence

Ever since the October revolution the Soviet Union has been able to count on the support of some foreigners who are willing to serve its interests because of their personal faith in the rightness of Communist ideology, and their acceptance of the Soviet government as the leader and supreme embodiment of the world Communist movement. Thus in addition to the usual military and economic instruments of statecraft, the Soviet Union has also had a further instrument that most other powers lack in its ability to manipulate the doings of Communists abroad on behalf of its own policy purposes.

It is obvious, however, that Soviet ideological influence has greatly declined since Stalin's day, and especially over the last two decades. A sharp relative decline in the importance of the ideological instrument was the inevitable consequence of the increasing power of the Soviet state, and of its military strength above all. In 1919, the British intervention in support of the anti-Bolshevik White forces in the Civil War encountered the fierce resistance of some British trade unions and of left-wing opinion in general; at a time when the fragments of a navy which the Bolsheviks had could do nothing to oppose British deliveries of arms and troops to Russian ports under White control, the help of British dockers -- who refused to load the supply ships --

was very useful indeed for Lenin's regime. Nowadays, the Soviet Union would scarcely need to rely on the support of British trade unionists against the Royal Navy.

But there has also been a very great absolute decline in the appeal of Communism as an ideology, and even more in the ability of the Soviet government to use foreign Communists for its own purposes. A generation ago, Communist parties directly controlled from Moscow could still attract the devoted loyalty of many intellectuals and trade union leaders throughout the industrialized world; in some countries, moreover, the local Communist parties also had a mass following. In practice, it was only in France and Italy that parliamentary Communist parties could actually influence public policy in important ways under Soviet direction, but Moscow had far more widespread reach through the individual intellectuals, opinion-makers and trade-unionists who were personally loyal to the Party as members or "fellow-travellers." The ostensibly non-Communist trade-union headed by Communists overtly declared or not was a common phenomenon, and practical politicians were reconciled to the disproportionate leverage of the Communist Party over labor unions, schools of higher education and the intelligentsia at large.

By way of the local Communist parties and their networks of militants and fellow-travellers, the Soviet leaders could thus have a say in the policy of many industrialized countries in the Western camp; only very rarely could they actually dominate government decisions, neither could their influence be ignored. Moscow also had a more direct but narrower influence by way of the various trans-national bodies it controlled, the "world federations" which grouped trade-unions, student groups and professional associations. More directly still, the Kremlin was served by the actual agents of the Comintern whose motives were ideological rather than career-oriented as in the other intelligence organizations -- and Comintern agents were of a quality much superior on the whole. Communists who served as outright agents could of course be ordered to do whatever Moscow wanted done; the common run of party members and fellow-travellers could never be so tightly controlled but their support amounted to a much more powerful if less versatile asset for Soviet policy. To be sure, such ideological support could only be manifested to serve Moscow's purposes when ideological proprieties and legality could both be maintained; further, it would take time to mobilize the mass of followers, many of whom were not actual Party members and thus did not belong to the chain of command that ultimately links the Soviet Politburo with the handful of members of each party cell in the most remote of places; finally, the network of foreign supporters could only be really effective when the issues which presented themselves were sufficiently

dramatic to allow the local party leadership to enlist the active help of the fellow-travelers first and then with their cooperation, to mobilize in turn mass support from outside the Party. But when all of these conditions could be satisfied, the results could be impressive indeed, as for example in the world-wide campaign against the American war in Korea (when one widely exploited issue was the accusation that the Americans had resorted to "germ warfare"). It is symptomatic of the decline of Soviet ideological influence that the world-wide agitation against America's role in the Vietnam War owed much more to the inspiration of the American anti-war movement than to Moscow's leadership and coordination.

This is not the place for a sustained analysis of the varied and complex causes of the decline of Communism as an ideology, and of the further decline in the Kremlin's ability to exploit such ideological support as it still has. In no particular order of importance, one may mention the division in the world-wide movement caused by the emergence of a rival center of the faith in Beijing; the shift in focus of the alienated intelligentsia from the problems of society to the problems of the self, so that a fascination with collectivism has given way to a fragmented faith in psychoanalysis, sexology, self-awareness cults, and still more dubious pursuits; the gradual discovery that the Soviet Union was a state much more bureaucratic than socialist, devoted more to the policeman than the worker, and more of a vehicle for Russian imperialism than for trans-national

socialism; in some quarters it was the belated recognition of the Soviet Union as yet another manifestation of Western culture, as one more "White" power structurally opposed to the claim of the "Third World", that destroyed its appeal. But perhaps above all it was the transformation of the Soviet Union from an embattled revolutionary underdog to the world's leading military power that made it seem less deserving of support. Certainly those who are systematically inclined to favor the weak and who identify military power itself with the source of all evil in this world can scarcely retain much affection for a Soviet Union so plainly strong, and so clearly militaristic.

The Soviet Union has not of course lost all its ideological supporters in the industrialized world; there are still firm loyalists and in large numbers in both France and Italy and also in Greece and Spain; and there are still Communist parties affiliated to Moscow all over the world, each with its disciplined leaders, loyal members and active fellow-travellers. But the depth of the remaining support for Soviet purposes, its intensity, and the degree to which the Party networks can be used to mobilize mass opinion have all greatly declined throughout the world.

It is obvious enough that the decline of Moscow's ideological influence in the industrialized world diminishes the overall power of the Soviet Union. But this is not a phenomenon entirely favorable for Western security because in the past the Soviet Union's desire to preserve the loyalty of its foreign supporters did in some degree inhibit its conduct.

However perverted, a residue of humanism remains in the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, and even though Moscow could conceal much of the evil that it was doing, especially from loyalists all too willing to avert their eyes and although the Kremlin's propaganda could successfully misrepresent much more, its need to preserve some outward ideological conformity long remained a moderating influence on Soviet conduct even in Stalin's day. Some specific inhibitions arose from the Soviet desire to preserve ideological support in countries where the Communist party was particularly strong. Thus for example it is reasonable to estimate that one reason why Stalin did not use force against Tito's errant Yugoslavia in 1948 was the catastrophic damage that an invasion would have inflicted on the Italian Communist Party, then as now the largest party outside the Blic.

Another adverse consequence of the decline of Communism in the industrialized world has been the shift in Soviet efforts, from the cultivation of broad social and political action by mass movements to the sponsorship of terrorism and guerilla warfare, not only in Latin America, Africa and Asia, but also in Europe and Japan. It is important to recall that for important organizational and ideological reasons the Soviet Union and the Communist parties it controlled used to be strongly opposed to terrorism. Communist parties are supposed to organze the masses, while terrorist groups are by nature unsuited to inspire

mass activity; violence was to be sure very much in order to bring about the revolution, but the Leninist prescription called for mass insurrection rather than individual acts of terrorism. Above all, terrorist bands were viewed with disfavor by Moscow because they could not be controlled by disciplined centralized leadership which would fit in the world-wide chain of command that runs from the Soviet Politburo to the national Party leaders.

It was only when it became clear that the Soviet Union was ineluctably losing the support of the trade unions and left-wing mass movements of the West that the Soviet leaders began to accept terrorists as useful allies; with the Leninist program of revolution by the working classes finally exposed as totally unrealistic, the Soviet Union began to arm and pay small bands of violent extremists in many parts of the world. Given the inherent obscurity of links that are by nature most secretive, it is difficult to prove the direct Soviet sponsorship of all the revolutionary terrorism that plagues the world. But by now a mass of irrefutable evidence has emerged which proves that it is the Soviet Union which provides directly or indirectly weapons, training and money which terrorists need in order to be effective. It is not by accident, as Pravda might say, that

the typical terrorist has characteristically spent some time in training camps in the Soviet Union, East Germany or Bulgaria or in such client-states as Cuba or South Yemen. When we catch a glimpse of terrorists in action, we usually see them armed with AK-47s, rocket-propelled RPGs or other such Soviet artifacts. And it is not by accident either that the great upsurge of terrorism in evidence since the mid-1960s followed closely the great decline in the Soviet Union's ideological influence. Always inspired by some local circumstance, so often greatly enhanced by Soviet support, terrorism has become the second-best substitute for the broad social, political and trade-union action which the Soviet Union can no longer manipulate.

Given the fundamental causes of the decline of Soviet-oriented Communism in the industrial democracies -- the only countries where the phenomenon can actually be observed -- it is reasonable to believe that the ideology is also in decline in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe as well. In Eastern Europe, to be sure, there was not much to decline from: there were only a few Communists in Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary when the Soviet army arrived in 1944 and it took energetic pressure and much subversion to make the creed at all popular. In Czechoslovakia the Communist Party was also small before the Second World War although it did have a sound base in mining and industrial areas; as

for the much larger German and Polish Communist parties, their mass following was decimated by the Nazis while their leaders, who had haplessly taken refuge in Stalin's Soviet Union, were mostly killed during the purges. Quite a few German Communists were handed over to the Gestapo in 1939, after the signature of the Nazi-Soviet pact.

Once the "People's Democracies" of Eastern Europe were established, largely by Soviet police terror and the subversion of the remaining non-Communist parties, there was of course a great expansion in the Party membership. Along with purely opportunistic careerists, there were also a good many genuine converts, especially among the intelligentsia and the industrial working classes, where Communist influence had been manifest before the war, if only in a small way. But the client regimes of Eastern Europe were destined to disappoint both old militants who had survived to see the great day and the new believers. Their failure was both moral and material, both social and national. It is symptomatic that by 1968, when the closed doors of censorship were suddenly opened the world discovered that there were very few Communists left in Czechoslovakia. (The slogan of the Prague Spring, "Communism with a human face" was a mere euphemism for social-democracy as the Soviet leaders pointed out.) Especially striking was the virtual absence of Communist influence among the young, wholly educated in the schools of the regime, and supposedly indoctrinated from birth.

That Communism has not "taken" in Eastern Europe, that the Soviet Union has perpetuated all the old anti-Russian sentiments while creating new ones (Czechs and Slovaks had once been well-disposed to their fellow-Slavs of the East) means of course that there is no "organic union" -- as the celebrated phrase goes -- between the Soviet Union and its European satellites, except possibly for Bulgaria, the one country backward enough to have been uplifted by the Soviet Union, and where pro-Russian sentiments were certainly very strong in the past.

Once again the otherwise welcome failure of Communist ideology has an unfavorable consequence: it imposes the role of policeman and occupier upon the Soviet Union, thus further reinforcing the institutions of repression inside Soviet society itself.

It is notoriously difficult to estimate the true status of the official Leninist ideology inside the closed society of the Soviet Union. Almost certainly, it is not any one reality that eludes us but rather a wide variety of conditions. At one extreme, Communism may still be a liberating faith to younger minds seeking to escape the tight bonds of the surviving traditional and Islamic societies of Central Asia and the Caucasus;

at the same time, Marxism-Leninism may be thoroughly obsolete and unworthy of serious concern for the more sophisticated of the Russian intelligentsia who are nowadays responsive to the flux of Western ideas. At the opposite extreme, the ideology may simply be seen as part of the hateful baggage of imperial domination by many in the non-Russian republics. For many Russians, on the other hand, it may have become the accepted ritual faith ("Lenin-worship") especially for that part of the population that has lost its roots and traditions in the upheavals of war, industrialization and the migration to the cities. Among the great mass of urban white-collar workers, that is the clerks of the bureaucracy, Marxism-Leninism is no doubt widely present as a strictly pro forma creed, largely ignored when not cynically play-acted; but then again, many low-level bureaucrats may have absorbed its dogmas as a set of pieties and conventions, much as their predecessors once believed in the Czar and the Church. And finally in rural Russia especially, there may remain even now a widespread nativist resistance to the ideology as a "modern" and alien creed, both from genuine traditionalists still living the village life in remote corners of the country, and from nostalgics among the urban intellectuals. Some, we know, have become fond of evoking the mythic purities of Old Russia and have demonstratively returned to Orthodox Christianity -- so as to better condemn the alienation and corruption of modern Soviet society. Very powerfully represented in exile, this form of specifically Russian anti-Communism may also be strong in the Soviet Union itself.

One thing that may count for a great deal in all this uncertain

diversity, at least for our present purpose, is the state of the ideology among those Soviet citizens who happen to be closest to the Kremlin leaders, whose attitudes are most directly manifest to them. It is a fair guess that what they say and do has a disproportionate impact on the perceptions of the most senior leaders, who are otherwise cut off from all personal contact with the populace. Evidence of continued devotion to the faith would naturally enhance the confidence of the leaders in the future prospects of the regime, while contrary information would naturally reinforce the pessimistic view -- and thus intensify the urgencies for action that such pessimism must breed. Who is in most intimate contact with the Kremlin leaders? First of course, their own families, that is their children by now middle-aged, and their grandchildren who are themselves already adults; then the bureaucrats and plain servants around them, the "consulting intelligentsia" retained for duty around the Politburo to play the expert role, and finally the literary and "entertainment intelligentsia" of writers, poets and performers of various kinds, whose attitudes can be made fully manifest even in the absence of personal contact.

It is enough to draw up the list to answer the question: whatever we know of the new privileged class of the sons and daughters suggests that the assiduous study of the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin would not fascinate them nearly as much as the pursuit of privilege; as for the <u>jeunesse doree</u> of the third generation, it seems that

among them an attitude of ideological indifference is a social norm and at least fashion, and even loud contempt is not rare. The body servants of the Kremlin mighty almost certainly manifest a very different attitude -- if only because they want to keep their jobs, and besides the moral economy of the servant requires a degree of respect for the master, and for his ostensible beliefs. But then again, the demi-gods of the Politburo are unlikely to be much impressed by the ideological conformity of their maids and valets, their waiters and chauffeurs. Nor is the consulting intelligentsia likely to be a great repository of the pure faith, if only because of all Soviet citizens they are the ones with the widest access to the West and its artifacts; one wonders how persuasive is their stance as rigid believers. Finally, the literary and "entertainment intelligentsia" has in recent years voted with its feet to an unprecedented degree: a significant slice of Russian culture is now already to be found in exile. The writers, poets and entertainers still living in the Soviet Union must conform or at least remain silent, but the exiles speak for them: their diversity as well as their sheer numbers should be a sufficient indication to the leaders of the prevailing attitude of the class as a whole.

Among the elite and the masses alike, among both Russians and non-Russians the decay of the official ideology of the Soviet Union is in a state already advanced, both in its role as a philosophical system to guide the elite and inspire the masses, and as a "bonding" faith for a large and highly heterogeneous society. Since the peoples of the Soviet Union lack any other basis of solidarity and indeed are divided by deep ethnic resentments, the decline of Marxism-Leninism

forces the regime to rely more and more on material incentives, or expression, to make up for the ideological cohesion that is plainly diminishing. To maintain the political equilibrium of Soviet society, the decline of the faith must be compensated by some increase in the standard of living, or some increase in police coercion, or some combination of both.

After Stalin's death, the role of repression in the mix was greatly reduced by the conscious and deliberate decision of the Kremlin leaders, who acted thus for their own political reasons (one cannot have an all-powerful police without having all-powerful policemen also). Since the ideology was already in decline the great increase in consumer welfare that Khrushchev inaugurated was a necessary substitute for the sharp reduction in the intensity of police coercion.

Khrushchev's successors have followed in his path, but with increasing difficulty. Khrushchev had the great advantage of starting from a very low base, but even today's modest levels of consumption have established a new minimum standard, from which further increases demand more and more in the way of resources. Secondly, while the Soviet economy continues to grow, its rate of growth is diminishing. Finally, the great increase in military expenditures that started in the last years of Khrushchev's rule seems to have become institutionalized. The military budget appears to be increasing at a steady rate year after year, even as the growth of the economy is slowing down to very little. Since the supply of

food and better products must also increase steadily if consumer satisfaction is to serve as a basis of political support for the regime, the Khrushchev formula could only work so long as economic growth could be rapid. And yet if the Soviet Union had remained on the path of Khrushchev's policy, it is precisely growth that would have suffered since investment had to be sacrificed to pay for increases in both consumer and military spending. Obviously a decline in investment must reduce the further growth of the Soviet economy, thus making it still more difficult to satisfy both the Soviet consumer and the relentless appetite for more military spending of the "metal eaters" (Khrushchev's own term for the Soviet military-industrial complex).

The partial reversion to "Stalinist" police coercion that we have witnessed since the fall of Khrushchev is therefore both logical and necessary: since the rate of increase in the flow of goods to the consumer could not be kept up, repression had to increase to preserve the equilibrium of the system. The post-Khrushchev reversion to (mild) Stalinism could only have been avoided by somehow contriving to revive the ideology or by reducing military expenditures, or else by drastic economic liberalization to achieve once again high rates of growth. As compared to these alternatives, either quite impractical or unacceptable to the regime or both, the tightening of police control was obviously the safest and most practical course for Brezhnev and his men. The equally obvious necessity of increasing "vigilance" during the years of detente, when Soviet society was inevitably becoming a little less impenetrable, worked to the same effect:

repression and detente only seemed contradictory to outsiders; within the system they were perfectly complementary.

Without being too mechanistic about the whole thing and always bearing in mind the great diversities of a very large empire of many nations, one may project the consequences of the combination of economic stagnation with the continued decline of the ideology as follows: First, an economic system that is becoming steadily less effective will require continued increases in investment just to maintain the present, very modest, rate of growth. Second, a Soviet Union in full pursuit of a global primacy in military power will have to spend more rather than less to maintain its current advantage given the increased American defense effort and the emerging world-wide coalition that links the United States, NATO, the People's Republic of China and a dozen other countries, including Japan; observers in the West must be a good deal more conscious of the weaknesses and disarray of the coalition than the Soviet leaders, who must estimate its potential strength prudently in the light of the great scope for increased military effort that theoretically remains possible in Europe and Japan. Third, now that increases in investment and military outlays jointly absorb most of the (slow) growth of the Soviet economy, very little room is left to provide the increase in living standards that the steady decline of ideological "bonding" would call for. That being the case, it seems safe to predict a gradual stiffening of police coercion.

To be sure, today's Soviet Union is still a paradise of legality as compared to the worst years of Stalin's rule; there is

pervasive repression but not the sheer terror of the midnight arrests and the Gulag. But as Khrushchev realized very clearly, the Soviet regime must either progress towards a Gulag Archipelago and a genuine liberalization -- if always under the Party's control -- or else to revert to the sinister tranquilities of the Stalinist order. It is obvious enough that the supreme bureaucrats who now rule in the Kremlin have their own good reasons to keep the policemen in their places, but the ideological decline and economic stagnation that are driving the regime towards increased oppression are far more powerful forces than the surviving hesitations, and political fears, of the Kremlin leadership. Every effort will no doubt be made to ensure that the policemen do not come to dominate the Party leadership itself, but rather than risk a Polish-style collapse the police would undoubtedly be given all the unfettered powers it once had over the population at large.

In theory, there is still the possibility of a drastic change of direction, whereby the political equilibrium of Soviet society would be preserved by reducing military expenditures and liberalizing the economy in order to realize its full potential for growth. But it is the politically more prudent course of a tighter repression that seems far more probable. This need not necessarily result in a more aggressive external policy by the regime but an increase in police repression would definitely require a further intensification in both the "threat propaganda" that justifies repression by pretending that it is aimed at a foreign threat, and in the controls that insulate Soviet society from the outside world. And it is these secondary

and almost technical requirements that are likely to have an adverse impact on Soviet foreign policy, compounding all the other forces that are driving matters in the same direction.

V. SOVIET IMPERIALISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

To show that the Soviet Union is now strong enough to expand by war does not suffice to predict that it will. To note the changes of political structure that have made of the Russians an imperial people once more, does not necessarily mean that their imperialism will be expansive -- even the Romans abandoned further conquest by their own choice long before their power began to decline. To argue that the Soviet leaders of today and tomorrow now have good reason to be pessimistic of the future of their regime, does not in itself justify the prediction that they will seek salvation in further conquest in order to extend further their fringe of client-states.

To recognize that the power of the Soviet armed forces is now such that all weak countries directly adjacent are now in peril, including both China and Iran, does not mean that the leaders of the Soviet Union will choose to avail themselves of the opportunity -- since great risks and substantial costs must persist. To explain that the great increase in the professional expertise of the Soviet armed forces opens a whole new repertoire of swift and decisive operations in the German style does indeed establish that one more pre-condition of aggression is now in place, but proves nothing more. And finally, to observe that the decline of the ideology diminishes inhibitions

while inducing a return to a society more closed, more martial and more fearful, does not prove that the path that leads to war will be taken.

The skeptics may therefore reject the argument as unproven by merely noting that not one practical incentive to expansion has been proven. Few will deny that the Soviet Union is afflicted by structural maladies that are both incurable and destined to be fatal but since these disfunctions are purely internal in both source and effect, why should the Soviet Union seek further conquests, which could do nothing to alleviate its fundamental problems, and which indeed could make them worse?

To argue that the Soviet Union has already entered into an era of imperial expansion it may therefore seem necessary to prove this or that conquest would yield some benefit that could directly alleviate the structural maladies. Why not for example show how greatly the Soviet Union might benefit from conquering the oil of the Persian Gulf? Or from imposing its power over Japan and its most industrious economy?

The attractions that such profitable ventures might have for the Kremlin cannot be entirely dismissed, but it would be wrong to offer them in support of the claim that the Soviet Union has now

become a classic military empire in pursuit of expansion. For to do so would imply that the test itself is valid, i.e., that internal structural maladies c ly cause external aggressiveness when expansion promises to bring concrete relief for those maladies. But of course the test is utterly without merit. If it was not because of their internal structure why did the empires of the past ever arise? Was it for gold that the Romans conquered the Latium around their city, and then all Italy and then the entire Mediterranean world, and then more? Was it for silver that Athens built a navy of imperial dimensions, or was it not rather the very opposite that happened, with a silver mine accidentally found being used to pay for triremes very deliberately built? And what were the precious metals, raw materials or markets that persuaded the Hapsburgs to annex Bosnia and Hercegovina in October 1908, ten years before their fall?

To be sure, there must be sufficient profit in the empire to pay for its costs over the long run, but profit cannot motivate the quest for empire, even if costly and profitless expansion cannot long be sustained. The diversities of history will naturally offer contrary examples -- but why should today's Soviet Union emulate exceptions such as the first, pre-Victorian, British empire? After all, merchant-adventurers are not especially prominent in the Kremlin.

That nations set themselves on the course of imperial expansion merely because they can, since their neighbours are weak, is the normal pattern of history. That the actual force that drives them to expand is precisely their own internal structure with all its strengths and disorders, is no more than a commonplace: given the power to act, disequilibrium inside seeks relief on the outside. And of course the favored justification for intruding on the lands of others is the defense of the lands already owned. That too is a thing entirely natural because a regime openly and consciously amoral cannot evoke and preserve loyalty. But in truth all motives and all justifications are of small import: once the internal condition of society is in a state of disequilibrium, once its leaders acquire the physical capacity for conquest, once military institutions are created which have no sufficient role in self-defense strictly defined, all manner of reasons and all sorts of rationalizations will emerge to make expansion seem attractive and to make its costs and risks seem worthwhile.

In the Soviet case the list of reasons and excuses for further imperial expansion may include any or all of the following: to arouse the national fervor of the ethnic Russians and enlist their enthusiasms to uphold the regime;to make the control of the non-Russians easier, by further enhancing the prestige of the empire; to distract attention from a poor economy; to improve the boundaries of the empire and extend its protective glacis of client-states so as to strengthen it to meet the coming crisis; to decisively weaken a major

antagonist, in order to allow a subsequent reduction in military efforts; or else to defeat a particular enemy deemed to be especially threatening over the long run. And so one may go on with the recitation of excuses good and bad, but to little purpose for such justifications are easily invoked to explain deeds that are in fact caused by circumstances. And the circumstances of an empire already powerful and becoming more so drive its leaders to find employment for their armed forces -- always supposedly to defend the conquests of the past by yet more expansion.

In this pattern, which is all too familiar in history, the justification of self-defense can easily be preserved: imperial territory is found to be in peril, or at least is disturbed by enemies based in lands that are beyond the limits of the empire; the security of the empire therefore requires that the frontier be moved outwards, to encompass and suppress the danger at its source. When that slice of expansion is duly achieved, by outright annexation or else by the creation of subservient client-states, it is soon discovered that the new frontier of the empire is also troubled from without -- and thus the stage is set for more expansion -- which may again be explained away as defensive in intent. It is certainly more comfortable to think of one's wars as defensive rather than to admit an outright aggression and besides, there will always be some foreigners who will find good reason to accept the claim of self-defense.

After all, to recognize aggression for what it is imposes the necessity of confronting it, and that in turn demands courage and sacrifice. If by contrast one can persuade oneself that the empire remains "essentially defensive" it can be claimed that resistance is unnecessary.

The Mechanics of Expansion

The aggressive nation-state is dangerous enough to civilization, but the aggressive empire is even more threatening because its growth -- by definition -- is not confined by the limits of a national homeland even if most ambitiously defined. Empires and nation-states can both expand but the former's growth is not bound by self-set limits of any sort. Some ultimate constraint is imposed all the same on the growth of empires, not so much by the quantum of their strength as by the specific forms of their instruments of power. In the Roman case for example, the peculiar strength of the army was in the legions, whose troops were more combat engineers than (heavy) infantry. Thus the Roman army was strongest in lands where there were cities to beseige or defend, not mere agglomerations easily yielded and soon restored but cities that were vital centers, essential to the lives of the respective peoples. To be sure, if the land itself was suitable for arable farming of reasonable yield, conquest could be profitable anyway and with a peaceful prosperity duly assured

cities would grow naturally after the fact. But in the forests and swamp of Germany peopled more by roaming slash-and-burn farmers, hunters and fishermen than a settled peasantry; in the steppe of the nomad horse shepherds and in the desert that could not be irrigated, the slow-moving Roman legion could neither get a grip on the elusive enemy, nor hold secure anything of value -- except by long walls that would themselves mark the renunciation of further expansion.

Similarly in our own day, the military strength of the empire of the Russians is still most strongly felt on land, where there is direct territorial contiguity. By the first century A.D., the Roman empire had reached its "operational" limit since expansion had everywhere come to an end in front of oceans, dense forest (with soil too heavy for the plow of those days), the desert and the steppe. The empire of the Russians is, by contrast, still far from its own operational limit of territorial contiguity; from the core of the Eurasian land-mass that the Russians already control, they could still expand their power to the west, south and east without having to cross wide ocean waters.

If imperial expansion were only possible by outright annexation, another and more restrictive limit would soon be encountered: the ability to conquer does not guarantee the ability to rule -- or not at any rate comfortably and at tolerable cost. When the new-won territory is densely inhabited by peoples which already have a political culture of their own, it can then be very

much harder to rule than to conquer. In such circumstances, direct control would require an indefinite military occupation which even if not greatly contested, must absorb some share of the forces of the empire, and diminish correspondingly its capacity for further expansion.

The Roman solution, as that of the Soviet Union, was to establish subservient client-states, nominally independent and charged with the administrative and political governance of lands effectively dominated by the empire but not annexed. The indispensable ingredient of indirect rule was and is a native political leadership able and willing to translate imperial desires into policy -- without provoking in the process any more resentment than the client-state can handle by its own mixture of welfare, propaganda and repression. The Romans eventually absorbed virtually all their client-states to make them into ordinary provinces, but several generations intervened between the initial conquest and the final annexation, so that the population could be Romanized before becoming legally Roman. And it was not only the peoples of the client-states were thus changed, but the empire too: while conquered peoples were gradually becoming Romanized, the empire itself was gradually becoming truly trans-national. Until then, however, the client-rulers had to manage the difficult feat of mdeiating between nativism and the empire, local interests and imperial interests, and the Romans did what they could to help, by tactful conduct which concealed as much as possible their true subservience. But the method only worked when the political class of the client-states was already culturally assimilated, either in the Latin vein or the

Greek, and when the mass of the population was not too far removed from a similar condition.*

To rule its client-states of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union has a similar requirement: it must rely on a native communist elite that can build and operate a tolerable imitation of the Leninist state with a pervasive bureaucratic control over all spheres of public life (this being the state accurately described as totalitarian).

The Leninist client-states provide a desirable substitute for annexation and direct Soviet rule to the extent that they can satisfy an ascending hierarchy of imperial needs. In the first place they must of course deny the use of their own territory to any power hostile to the empire; this is a minimum condition and easily met -- and not only by Leninist client-states (Finland comes to mind, unavoidably). Second, there are a variety of "positive" services: diplomatic support, including bloc voting at the U.N., intelligence collaboration and, above all, the deployment of subservient military forces -- a service especially valuable if the client forces are also usable in part for imperial purposes elsewhere (Cuba is the prize exhibit). Not all the Leninist client-states provide all of these services, and the Soviet leaders have been satisfied with less than total support (Romania is the border-line case). Thirdly, there are the economic services, achieved in the degree that the client's economy is integrated into Soviet planning, and to the extent that the Soviet Union can obtain valuable goods in exchange for exports that it can spare. Nowadays, few of the client-states fulfill the economic desiderata to any

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* In places where such circumstances did not obtain, as in Judea and the Bosporan state for example, endemic revolt made the client system quite unworkable [illegible] violently challenged, and was thus made costly and difficult.

satisfactory extent, and Poland is not the only one which obtains valuable raw materials from the Soviet Union in exchange for shoddy goods unsaleable on the world market.

A final criterion is the degree of self-sufficiency in repression. The net value of the positive services and of the economic cooperation which the Soviet Union receives is diminished to the extent that the client's control over its own population requires the presence of Soviet forces. The Czechoslovak regime for example is very cooperative indeed in every way, but since it must be kept in power by large numbers of Soviets troops it may be less desirable as a client than the Romanian, which provides few positive services (aside from some espionage work) and which firmly refuses economic cooperation, but which also runs its own system of repression so well that it does not need any Soviet garrison at all. To be sure the five Soviet divisions in Czechoslovakia are part of the Soviet Union's general deployment on the "western front", and would no doubt be maintained somewhere in the region anyway. But the fact that Soviet forces are actually tied down in Czechoslovakia since revolt could follow from their removal is a significant loss, since the Soviet high command cannot count on those divisions as part of its "disposable" military capability available for expansion.

Whether fully satisfactory as Bulgaria is or only minimally adequate as Romania, the Leninist client-states do for the empire of the Russians what their client-princes did for the Romans: they provide the security benefits of imperial expansion without the administrative and political burdens of direct rule. In the Roman case, the geographic

scope of this device of empire was limited to the areas of Latin or Greek culture (and thus fully exhausted by the first century A.D.). In the Soviet case, by contrast, there is again much room for more expansion. Even though there may not be one state in the whole world whose citizens would willingly elect a Marxist-Leninist government, equally there is not one that does not have at least the nucleus of a Communist party -- which can instantly provide a Leninist client-regime upon the arrival of Soviet military power on the scene.

Even in a country as backward and fanatically Islamic as Afghanistan, with hardly a semblance of a "working class" (as Marxists would define such things) and with only a tiny intelligentsia, the Soviet Union was able to find enough "Marxist-Leninists" to form a government -- even though their numbers and abilities turned out to be insufficient to secure control unaided by Soviet troops. One may doubt the ideological expertise of these Afghan clients but in Moscow's eyes that has long ago ceased to be a virtue as important as obedience.

If the relative power of the Soviet Union were to increase in the future as it has done in the past, expansion may well follow. If so any further aggrandizement of the Soviet Union's territory would still remain most unlikely, and we would see instead the creation of new client-states at the periphery of the empire. Since a nominal independence can be preserved, and some license given to expressions of nationalism, this classic device of empire is far better attuned to the temper of our times than outright annexation. Besides, the demographic equilibrium of the Soviet Union requires the exclusion of [illegible] nationalities.

Physical military facts still set hard limits to the scope of Soviet imperial expansion, but no inner limits are set by the requirement of political control: the Leninist formula, when fully supported by the technology of repression so well developed by the Soviet Union, has proved to be very exportable indeed. To be sure, nationalism is the hardy perennial of politics but it can only threaten the client-regimes if they violate the Leninist formula by allowing truly independent institutions to survive. If that happens, it hardly matters what the institution is, for any institution left free in an otherwise controlled society will become a vehicle of nationalism -- as indeed of any other anti-regime ideal. That obviously was the case in Poland where the Catholic Church has inherently served as the bastion of resistance to the state. If the totalitarian state is true to its name and no independent institutions survive, the regime itself can harness national feelings for its own purposes. Where there is no shelter and nourishment for any more assertive nationalism, the client rulers can plausibly present themselves as the "nationalist" alternative to direct Soviet rule. To some extent, all of the East European client-regimes attempt to play that role, with varying degrees of success. The Romanian regime can exploit nationalist feelings most easily because it has in truth a large measure of independence, to the point where its very status as a client-state is a matter of debate. The Czechoslovak regime brought to power by Russian soldiers in 1968 can scarcely benefit at all from its (muted) nationalist pretensions. The East German regime is slightly better placed than the Czechoslovak but matters are complicated by the hesitation with which any German government must approach nationalist themes. In the case of Bulgaria the traditional acceptance of the Russians

as protectors, makes it rather easy for the regime, while in Hungary the regime can make large use of the common perception that it stands as the only alternative to Soviet rule more directly applied.

The Soviet leaders continue to advertise their willingness to use force against popular revolt, or defection by the client-rulers themselves, but with growing confidence that comes from the sheer experience of empire, also from the rising power of the Soviet Union, indirect rule has become increasingly flexible and subtle. The nation-state which wages war upon the foreigner certainly fears defeat, but the empire that makes war on its own subjects must fear the costs of victory also, in the enduring bitterness and silent resistance that follows. The Soviet Union must prefer to avoid direct intervention but to retain the deterrent benefit of its violent repressions of the past, in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, it must always remain poised to do the same again. In the case of Poland the credibility of a Soviet invasion was a most important factor in ensuring at least a temporary success of the martial-law government inaugurated in December 1980.

In the Polish case, the rise of a free trade union movement exceeded the bounds of Soviet flexibility, but otherwise -- so long as the essential security interests of the Soviet Union are duly protected -- much may be tolerated in the client-states. Just as the Romans would collect tribute and recruits from some nations while being satisfied with recruits only elsewhere, or even by mere symbolic tokens

of allegiance from still others, the contemporary Soviet empire tolerates the considerable liberties of Hungary, the deviant diplomacy of Romania and the long-standing abdication of the Polish regime from a proper Leninist monopoly of power. In 1948, by contrast, Stalin could not tolerate even the slightest nationalist deviation from an otherwise very Stalinist Tito, because the Soviet Union was then very weak, and her arts of indirect rule were still in embryo. A generation later, an immensely stronger Soviet Union much more experienced in the craft of empire can afford a much more realxed attitude in dealing with the client-regimes. Certainly this new tolerance of diversity cannot be taken as a sign of weakness but must rather be recognized as evidence of a new self-confidence, based on strength.

VI. The Future Scope of Soviet Imperial Expansion

It is obvious that a great military empire will try to exploit such opportunities for aggrandizement as present themselves from time to time; and of course some states that are neither empires nor great will act just in the same way, if they have enough power for the deed. During the 1970s the Soviet Union thus engaged its successful ventures of penetration in both Ethiopia and Angola and otherwise made its presence felt wherever local circumstances created an inviting prospect especially if American power was absent or else defeated, as notably in the case of Laos and Vietnam. More such opportunities will no doubt arise in the future (even though American passivity is no longer to be expected) and the Soviet Union will no doubt be tempted again, sometimes to meet with and sometimes perhaps not.

But such things are not the proper business of empire, and would not offer proper employment for great and still increasing military power. Given the nature of the contemporary Soviet Union and its particular combination of strengths and weaknesses it is not opportunities that will attract major attempts at expansion but rather threats. So it was for the Romans during their ascent and indeed for all other classic continental empires including the British Raj in India (though not for the maritime British empire as a whole).

Since even with Afghanistan in chronic revolt the Soviet Union has large and well-equipped forces that are fully deployable and not committed either to client-state garrisons or territorial defenses

we may assume that the Soviet leaders are even now being pressed to use this disposable margin of strength to extend the reach of imperial control. In fact, we may take it for granted that competing war-schemes of one sort or another, whose goals are to create more client-states, are now in circulation within the Soviet military and political hierarchy. Such schemes there must be, but they await the right circumstances, and perhaps the right leaders.

Needless to say, in Soviet circumstances, all such war-schemes must be unfailingly defensive in strategic intent; but that is merely ordinary procedure for an empire of rising power. So it was for the Romans, who had to conquer Latium to secure Rome itself, then Italian lands north and south to secure the Latium, then Gallia Cisalpina and Sicily to secure the Italian core, then Gaul and Illyricum to protect Northern Italy -- and so it went till finally the continental limits, or the economic limits of deep forest, swamp and steppe were duly reached; even after that Britain supposedly had to be subdued supposedly to calm the dissidence of the far seashore of Gaul which the Druids of Britain were supposedly inspiring from across the Channel.

But aside from the usual dynamics of imperial power, there is also a urgency in the Soviet case (if the hypothesis of regime pessimism is accepted). It is not just a question of using uncommitted divisions (and all that goes with them) to further expand the empire, but rather to employ a transient military advantage before it is too late, to gain a permanent enhancement in the

security of the empire. Having accumulated its surplus of disposable military strength by the great economic sacrifice imposed on the peoples of the empire, by a great tenacity of policy, and by the professionalism of the military command and the wise economy of its military-industrial establishment -- the Soviet Union cannot retain its advantage for long with a stagnating economy. During all the years when American strength was allowed to decline, and all the years when America's allies were failing to make the effort needed to offset the adverse change in the balance of power, the Soviet Union kept up its steady investment in military forces of all kinds. But inevitably Soviet planners must now foresee that the superiorities thus gained will evaporate during the 1990s. All the sacrifices and all the discipline will have been for naught -- unless the power thus accumulated is wisely employed to achieve a permanent improvement in the security position of the Soviet Union.

There is to be sure the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, a most natural victim of the changed balance of power in which the buffer state of yesterday must now become another client, aspiring to autonomy at most, but certainly not to independence. But Afghanistan is too small a gain to satisfy a great empire, and too minor an entanglement to absorb the capacity for more expansion. The six or seven divisions in Afghanistan can hardly exhaust the disposable military strength of the Soviet Union. In spite of all the colorful prose of such journalists as venture into the Afghan war-zones, the resistance is a small affair for the Soviet armed forces. One statistic suffices to prove the point: by the highest estimate only 4 percent of Soviet divisional troops were in Afghanistan (in 1982). Measuring

military power as the Russians would do, by counting divisions, we can estimate the magnitude of the Soviet Union's "disposable" strength by a process of elimination. By the lowest estimate in 1982 the Soviet army had a total of 180 divisions.* Of these, 30 are in Eastern Europe to secure its obedience and also to intimidate Western Europe. Another 46 are deployed along the very long border with China and there are 26 divisions on the "southern front," opposite Turkey, Iran, and also in Afghanistan. This leaves a minimum of 78 uncommitted divisions, in theory, a very large disposable force quite sufficient to carry out very ambitious war operations. But only a few of the uncommitted divisions are fully manned in peacetime; the rest would have to be filled with recalled reservists before they could fight. Moreover, war operations could not be mounted by the full number of disposable divisions since the Soviet leaders would insist on reinforcing other fronts as well, and they would also want to keep a central reserve in being. Thus the true magnitude of the Soviet Union's invasion potential on any front is defined by the present peacetime deployment and the additional reinforcement available upon mobilization as illustrated in the table below:

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* From Soviet Military Power, Department of Defense (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981). There are 47 tank, 7 airborne, and more than 126 "motorized rifle" divisions. In addition, there are also at least 14 artillery divisions, and a variety of special units, including elite helicopter-borne brigades. Not under army command but equipped on military lines, the 460,000 border and security units of the KGB and MVD would play a major role in any war deployment.

DISTRIBUTION OF SOVIET ARMY DIVISIONS: CURRENT AND ILLUSTRATIVE

	Western Front	Southern Front	Eastern Front	Central Reserve
Current Deployments	30[i]	26[ii]	46	78[iii]
War in the West (NATO flanks or Central Front)	80-90[iv]	26[v]	46-56[vi]	18[vii]
War in the East (Sinkiang or other in China)	46[viii]	26[v]	90[ix]	18[vii]
War in the South (Iran, or Pakistan or Iran + Gulf)	70[x]	36[xi]	46-56[vi]	18-28[vii]

i. Forward-deployed only, in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.
ii. Including six divisions+ (one AB) in Afghanistan.
iii. Including many divisions actually earmarked for the Western Front.
iv. Even a limited-scope operation (e.g., to seize northern Norway) must imply the possibility of a wider conflict and requires in any case that potential NATO/US reinforcements be pinned down on the Central Front.
v. Owing to its proximity and the weakness of the adjacent countries, no war-time reinforcements would be needed.
vi. Owing to the remoteness of much of this front, precautionary reinforcements might be necessary.
vii. It can be assumed that additional army divisions and KGB/MVD units would be formed as soon as the current forces would be fully mobilized. As it is, 200,000 KGB border troops and 260,000 MVD security troops are available to augment the 18 divisions, at least for internal security and tactically-defensive purposes.
viii. The West would be reinforced not only as a precautionary measure but also to deter the transfer of military supplies to the PRC.
ix. Assumes that current basing infrastructures could accommodate two divisions in places where now only one is actually deployed.
x. This would be a pinning-down reinforcement to deter US re-deployments to the Persian Gulf.
xi. Infrastructure limits (especially the road net) and the weakness of the presumptive enemies would limit this deployment.

The procedure here followed may seem antique, since military power is reckoned by ground-force divisions as much an Eighteenth Century marshal might count regiments of horse and foot. But it does correspond to the conditions of Soviet war-planning. Strategic-nuclear, theater-nuclear, and battlefield-nuclear forces are in place to deter others' attempts at deterrence, and the tactical-air and long-range aviation forces are more than adequate to support war operations whose scale and form are in fact defined by ground capabilities. For geographic reasons alone, the role of the Soviet navy in any non-nuclear war would be marginal at best. Thus the division count is a true indicator of the Soviet Union's war-making potential.

As we approach the core of the matter, the where and the when, we can diminish the range of possibilities to an important degree by removing from consideration all war schemes that would require the Soviet Union to use nuclear weapons and those which would entail any significant probability of a nuclear response by the victim. A war deliberate and calculated, started by a Soviet regime pessimistic about its future but certainly far removed from any desperate sense of immediate vulnerability cannot possibly be a nuclear war by intent. Since the goal would be to capitalize on past efforts, to achieve a long-term enhancement of the already rather satisfactory security position of the Soviet Union, the atmosphere of decision would be far removed from the terrible urgencies that might make the resort to nuclear weapons acceptable. Moreover, given this context and this purpose we may take it for granted that the advocates of war in the Kremlin would have to persuade the supreme leaders that the entire operation could be brought to a satisfactory conclusion without nuclear weapons being used in retaliation by the victim.

Any decision to go to war entails risk, including the risk of having miscalculated the risk, but we may legitimately expect that the Soviet leaders will avoid the grossest kind of miscalculation, such as an attack on the NATO Central Front in Germany mounted in the belief that there would be no nuclear response by strategic, theater or battlefield weapons -- including weapons held under dual-key arrangements. However diminished the credibility of nuclear retaliation by the United States and NATO might be in peacetime, the Soviet leaders must be prudent in calculating how both might react amidst the unleashed terror and chaos of invasion.

A second limitation on the scope of any Soviet war-scheme is that any territory to be seized in permanence from the enemy would have to be (very) thinly populated, or else its population must be politically suitable for the establishment of client-states. Thus, for example, Northern Norway may be annexed, or at least kept indefinitely under some form of military administration, and the same would be true of China's remote and scarcely peopled border fringes, such as North-West Manchuria beyond the Khingan mountain range. On the other hand, no stable client-regime could be established in some part of a country whose population belongs to a larger ethnic or cultural community that would otherwise be left independent -- and no doubt unreconciled to the loss. East Germany is exactly in that condition but scarcely offers a model to be emulated.

In practice, this limitation dictates that a new Soviet conquest must either embrace a country's entire territory (as with Afghanistan) or else it must coincide with the boundaries of a region which is

ethnically distinct and thus has a prior inclination to separatism. In this way, the eventual client regime could seek popular support on a nationalist basis; moreover, the ultimate political cost of the Soviet invasion on the international scene could then be diminished by presenting the outcome as the successful liberation of a subject nationality. In due course, the new-made client-state could receive international recognition -- just as the People's Republic of Mongolia has done.

To establish a list of all possible war schemes is easy enough, but it would not take us very far since we cannot predict why or when any particular scheme might find favor with the Soviet leaders. It is useful on the other hand to group the various possibilities according to the kind of additional security which they would provide.

Expansion for Political Security

The pyramid of repression that begins with the rule of the supreme leaders over the party (which in turn rules over the Russians, who collectively rule the non-Russians), and whose base is the Soviet Union's domination of the client-states can never be sufficiently secure to satisfy the leaders at the very top -- especially if they stay on the present and difficult path whereby they retain totalitarian control, while rejecting police terror in the Stalin style. The weakest part of the pyramid must be just above its base, where the client-state populations touch upon the non-Russian populations of the western USSR. The danger of course comes from further afield: so long as Western Europe remains provocatively independent and arrogantly free in expression -- as the Russians would see it -- the peoples of Eastern Europe accept the lot ordained for them by

strategy and geography. And so long as the peoples of Eastern Europe remain chronically restive, the non-Russian western fringe of the Soviet Union itself must also remain vulnerable to nationalist dissidence. Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, some Byelorussians, all Moldavians, and many Ukrainians remain unreconciled to the rule of Russians over them, and their stubborn refusal even in the dim light of self-determination that comes from the nearby client-states -- states of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania.

The radical solution would be to attack the ultimate source of the problem, namely the power of the United States which guarantees the independence of Western Europe. That being still impossibly dangerous at present, the second-best solution is to erode and if possible break the security nexus between the United States and Western Europe. To do so would establish the strategic order that would already have emerged in 1945 had it not been for the intrusion of American power embodied in NATO. The countries of Western Europe, collectively an appendage of the Soviet-dominated Eurasian landmass, would then quite naturally come under Soviet influence, certainly to an extent sufficient to nullify all dissidence in Eastern Europe.

The second-best solution is of course the central goal of the Kremlin's foreign policy, pursued ever since 1945 by the full range of instruments available to Soviet statecraft, from the softest kind of allusive diplomacy all the way to outright threats, from the general build-up of Soviet military power to the manipulation of trade links with Western Europe.

In this context, schemes for localized and limited war could serve two purposes, one broad and one narrow. If the Soviet Union could invade and hold some part of NATO territory without unleashing either nuclear response or a wider conflict that would in turn inevitably entail large nuclear risks, it could hope to undermine the fundamental solidarity of the United States and its allies, thus accomplishing the broader purpose. To be successful, such an operation would have to result, swiftly, in some territorial gain which could be frozen by the familiar device of a quick armistice followed by protracted and inclusive negotiations. The narrower purpose would be to seize territory of inherent strategic importance, such as the Baltic approaches, northern Norway, north-eastern Turkey, and so on.

This of course is the most prosaic of war-scenarios, already studied and debated ad nauseam. The fact remains that both the far north of Norway and the remote border region of north-east Turkey remain especially vulnerable to a Soviet coup de main. There are no nuclear weapons in place which might automatically deter by their very presence, and both areas are physically and psychologically remote from the centers of the alliance -- including even Oslo and Ankara to some extent. As for the conventional balance, it is most unfavorable and the prospects of successful resistance to a surprise attack are poor indeed. Of the two schemes, the seizure of northern Norway would rate somewhat higher in both incentive and risk because of the value of the territory as a basing area for the interdiction of U.S.-European maritime communications.

So long as the Soviet Union continues to make such good progress towards its second-best goal of eroding the cohesion of the Alliance, by diplomacy, propaganda and the manipulation of trade, any war scheme against the outer flanks of NATO must remain almost as unattractive as an invasion of the German "central front" itself. However localized and swift an operation might be, and even if Americans and Europeans would be caught wholly unprepared psychologically and politically to make a deliberate nuclear response, the risk would still be great in the chain of events. Ironically the nuclear risk is only made greater by the very weakness of the non-nuclear forces of the Alliance: the prompt defeat of the local forces (which are small or ill-prepared in both northern Norway and eastern Turkey) is likely to be followed by a swift expeditionary response by mixed NATO forces, as now planned; that in turn is most likely to result in a debacle -- if only because in all joint Alliance ventures symbolic forms utterly dominate the substance of true combat capability. Then, in the wake of a military defeat, tactical nuclear strikes upon the Soviet forces in place might suddenly seem unavoidably necessary, to redeem defeat, preserve the solidarity of the Alliance and restore its ability to deter further and more dangerous aggression against the more central regions of NATO.

This kind of localized operation is not therefore promising for the Soviet leaders, though of course it cannot altogether be ruled out from the realm of possibilities. It is certainly inexcusable that the remote flanks of the Alliance should be so lacking in [illegible] would almost [illegible] commando operation writ large: as it is, even a single Soviet

division of good quality could seize the crucial terrain of the far north of Norway almost overnight, if well provided with helicopters.

Expansion for Strategic Security

This kind of war-scheme must be of salient importance: political security protects against an erosion of control; regional security protects this or that periphery but strategic security protects the empire itself. In the absence of any imminent threat, however, war waged to enhance the empire's strategic security is only conceivable if the theory of regime pessimism is accepted. Otherwise the great risk inherent in this kind of war-scheme -- of necessity directed against the greatest antagonist -- cannot possibly be deemed acceptable. We begin by asking the classic question: what is the main enemy? What is the power whose future growth could eventually threaten the very existence of the empire?

Certainly two powers rise above all others, but the loose commonplace that would make the United States and the People's Republic of China similar to one another as the chief adversaries of the Soviet Union obscures the most fundamental of strategic questions: what is the role of each in Soviet strategy?

First and foremost, the United States is the great extra-continental European power that has intervened successfully ever since the Second World War to subtract Western Europe from the Soviet sphere of influence. In addition, the American intrusion has, as we have seen, an indirect effect yet more serious for the Kremlin, since it is the protected freedom of Western Europe that continuously undermines the stability of the client-states of Eastern Europe; and this

in turn threatens not only the external security of the Soviet empire but also on its own internal security. American power in Europe must thus amount to a basic security threat to the Soviet Union, quite independently of any military threat as such. It matters little, therefore, that the United States, its forces of Europe and NATO have no aggressive intent: the very existence of a powerful American active in Europe <u>is</u> an aggression from the Soviet point of view since by making Western Europe secure enough to retain its freedoms it subverts the machine of imperial control. Thus the Soviet leaders are merely being sincere when they claim that NATO is an aggressive alliance, even if those in the West who believe them are merely fools.

Beyond Europe, the United States is not always the most serious antagonist that the Soviet Union encounters in its global quest for access and influence. Sometimes feeble or even absent from the scene, other times highly energetic, thus inconsistent but always capable of very great sudden efforts, the United States has not been an easy opponent for Soviet policy, but neither has it been implacable in opposing Soviet aims. Certainly the Kremlin's quest for world-wide influence has had its setbacks, but having started with practically nothing in 1945 the Soviet Union can now count on quite a few clients and allies, well beyond the original continental limits of its power. It may be concluded, therefore, that the United States has been a manageable diplomatic adversary for the Soviet Union.

Finally -- and this is the quality that would have been first until quite recently -- the United States is the world's second-

[redacted]

nuclear weapons of all kinds, including some nine thousand missile warheads and bombs continuously targeted on the cities, industrial centers, military installations and major infrastructures of the Soviet Union. The destructive capacity of the American nuclear arsenal is undoubted fact, and yet it harder and harder to believe that it evokes any urgent sense of menace in Moscow. While no doubt much more skeptical of the reliability of "mutual" deterrence than their American counterparts*, the leaders of the Soviet Union must certainly appreciate the high degree of safety which it provides -- if only because the awesome threat of American nuclear bombardment is more than matched by their own ability to retaliate in kind.

Certainly for many years now the ultimate danger of a homeland-to-homeland "strategic" nuclear war has lacked any immediacy, and with the passage of time it has become less and less thinkable -- except in the context of crisis "scenarios" that must seem of diminishing plausibility even to the most pessimistic of Soviet leaders. The huge Soviet investment in non-nuclear forces proves conclusively that the belief of some that any major Soviet-initiated war would be nuclear from the start is not shared by the Soviet leaders themselves.

Chronic friction between the Soviet Union and the United States is inherent in the situation, and outright hostility must become the

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* Some of whom seem to think that deterrence is a kind of machine, instead of a set of human expectations subject to all the vagaries of human emotion, and subject also to the cognitive distortions that flourish in crises.

order of the day whenever Soviet policy is true to the character of an expanding military empire -- and American policy chooses to recognize it as such. But in spite of all the crises and confrontations of the last three decades there is just too much sheer space between the two antagonists to allow the growth of the sort of lethal intimacy which is characteristic of enemies that are in direct territorial contact. Images of American forces invading Russian lands, there to occupy towns, burn villages and massacre innocent civilians and likewise, images of Soviet troops invading American soil belong to the absurd realm of paranoid fear or comic invention. For all the fundamental gravity of the clash of interests and values, the contentions of the two sides must be judged as ultimately peripheral, as compared to what is at stake when nations must protect their own homelands against one another.

Finally, the United States is by far the most important source of food, animal feed and technical know-how for the Soviet economy. Sometimes sold directly on quite favorable commercial terms, and sometimes restricted by way of reprisal, what Americans export and invent is always in fact beneficial to the Soviet Union because these things flow into the global pool from which the Soviet Union also draws, directly or indirectly. No matter what restrictions are imposed on direct trade and technology transfer, the United States cannot avoid contributing to the welfare of the Soviet Union, either by way of the natural migration of technology or because American exports of products denied to the Soviet Union (e.g., grains) "back-out" third party supplies, which are in turn sold to the Soviet Union.

Compare now the People's Republic of China by the same criteria. In the first place, there is the mere fact of territorial contiguity over several thousand miles of border -- some of it disputed. Mere topographic complexities and even climatic instabilities (such as the variable floods and shifting mud islands of Ussuri) can be sources of tension in themselves. More important, there is much scope for Chinese territorial revisionism hinged on historical boundaries -- even if that means that the People's Republic of China has to assert the claims of an imperial dynasty that was Manchu and not ethnically Chinese, over lands never seriously settled by the Chinese people.

But to view the length, the complexities and the history of the border as the source of hostility between Moscow and Bejing is to confuse cause with effect. And the same is true of the ideological rivalry that supposedly divides the two sides. That the contentions between the vulgar-Marxists of Moscow and the vulgar-Marxists of Bejing cannot possibly be anything but the instruments of a hostility that has quite other causes is clearly proven by their mere persistence through the wildest gyrations in the official ideological line of the Chinese Communist Party.

Once we duly disregard such effects, the true cause, which is simple enough, stands revealed: the Soviet Union and the People's Republic are both Great Powers in a world that now counts only three,

and they are adjacent, while the third is removed from both. The People's Republic and the Soviet Union both have some latitude in shaping their American policy but they are almost mechanically predestined to hostility towards each other. So much is true, obvious, and not particularly enlightening. But there is much more than that in the quarrel.

As we have seen, the Soviet Union is no longer simply a Great Power but has now become a great continental military empire. As such it is engaged in the classic quest for total preclusive security. Russians qua Russians are said to have their own culturally ordained hostility towards the Chinese, supposedly by transfer from their historic experience of Mongol and Turkic domination (of which the Chinese were in fact fellow-victims). It is hard to say to what degree such misdirected folk memories and ancestral fears are live forces in the minds of Russians nowadays, though no doubt the "Yellow Peril" theme offers much scope for propagandistic manipulation. There must be a "Russian" element in the overall Soviet attitude towards the People's Republic of China, but it is bound to be conditioned much more importantly by the very character of the Soviet state as a military empire in search of preclusive security.

As we have seen, in the imperial scheme of things a belt of client-states must ideally begin where territory actually annexed comes to an end. Beyond the client-states, or in their place, states of small power and respectful conduct are also acceptable. What is quite intolerable is a neighbor [illegible] adjacent that is both significantly powerful and defiantly independent. The People's Republic of China

is all of these things. In addition, it is also an ideological competitor. When the very large geographic dimensions, huge population and theorteical power-potential of the People's Republic are added to the scales, it becomes clear that for the Soviet empire its very existence as a power of growing strength is no more acceptable than a strong and prosperous Carthage was for Rome.

Two things served to moderate the Soviet attitude to China until 1977 or thereabouts: the so-called Cultural Revolution that began in 1966 and the continued primacy of Mao Tse Tung, its chief protagonist. So long as the predominant faction in Bejing was content to subordinate industrial growth and economic development in general to the pursuit of equality, so long as Red prevailed over Expert in all matters, and above all, so long as the growth of Chinese military power almost ceased in order to preserve a balance of sorts between well-armed militias under leftist command and well-trained but antiquated regular forces under professional control, the leaders of the Soviet Union could cheerfully defer all radical solutions to their Chinese problem. The balance of military strength, already very favorable, could only become more favorable still so long as the steady growth of Soviet military power continued year after year, while the Chinese armed forces remained stagnant. Moreover, the great scientific and industrial advantages of the Soviet Union would also become greater still with the mere passage of time.

In the West there has been some talk from time to time about a supposed "point of no return" for Soviet military action against China, or more precisely against its nuclear arsenal. But in fact

there was no such point in the past, though there may be one in the future. It is true that the number of Chinese nuclear weapons continued to increase, but only very slowly throughout the sixties and seventies. During the same period on the other hand, the number, accuracy, presumptive reliability and controlability of Soviet long-range nuclear weapons increased very rapidly indeed. Detailed comparisons between Soviet disarming counter-force capabilities (versus the number, hardness, and stability of Chinese "nuclear" targets) in, say, 1967 and then again in 1980 show that the Soviet Union could have accomplished what some are pleased to call a "surgical" nuclear strike much more easily on the second of those dates. The reason is simple enough: in mid-1967 the Soviet Union reportedly had an inventory of roughly 460 intercontinental ballistic missiles, all single warhead typed with median inaccuracies mostly worse than three-quarters of a nautical mile; by 1980 its ballistic missiles could deliver several thousand warheads, many of them with expected median inaccuracies of less than one quarter of a nautical mile. As for ballistic missiles of less than intercontinental range, it is simply pointless to compare the SS-20s of 1980 with the weapons (SS-4s and SS-5s) available in 1967, since the latter were far too inaccurate and much too unreliable, for any purpose more demanding than the bombardment of large cities. Similarly, against the background of Chinese air defenses scarcely improved, Soviet airpower achieved a very great enhancement in long-range strike capabilities with the introduction of the "tactical" Su-24 and the "strategic" Backfire. The Soviet ability to destroy small, time-sensitive and rather elusive targets increased much more than the resilience of the PRC's nuclear arsenal. Since 1980 the

vulnerability of the Chinese nuclear forces have continued to increase, as the sequence of testing and calibration improves Soviet missile accuracies while the Soviet air force realizes the full potential of its strike potential with the newer fighter-bombers of the MiG-23 and Su-24 families. In fact the possibility of a non-nuclear Soviet attack -- which could truly be "surgical" cannot now be excluded.

Thus a Soviet Union gaining steadily on the Chinese faced no crisis of decision. There was, moreover, a positive reason for waiting, or at least a plausible excuse for delay. While Mao still lived, the Chinese government could not possibly negotiate a modus vivendi acceptable to the Soviet Union. Such an arrangement would require Chinese recognition of the "realities" of power as the Russians see them; in other words, it would call for a Chinese acknowledgement of Soviet predominance -- symbolized by the Chinese Communist Party's formal acceptance of Moscow's ideological primacy. That Mao would never agree to any such accommodation was self-evident. To be sure, it was by no means probable that Mao's successors would agree either, but the Soviet leaders could always wait and hope. Their own strong ideological bias toward what they understand as "realism" may well have inclined them to believe that post-Mao Chinese leaders would turn out to be reasonable men, willing -- as Mao never was -- to accept the imperatives of power.

There was, moreover, the American factor. Regardless of the formal diplomatic status of Washington-Bejing relations, American military power must play some role in any Soviet-Chinese conflict in ways both direct and indirect. [illegible] the immediate scale and actual usefulness of American military assistance given to a China under attack

would depend on the specific form of Soviet military action, some sort of American aid would have to be taken for certain. Whether significant in itself or not, the mere fact of American involvement would have two very important longer term consequences: first it might serve to engage the United States in the conflict by slow stages; supplies of medical equipment might come first, and then weapons covertly supplied and then more; naval protection of U.S. ships at sea might give way to harbor defense and then more; unacknowledged air support could come next, and then more. Secondly, this process would almost certainly drive the United States toward a high degree of general rearmament. The hope of the first and the results of the second consequence would encourage the Chinese leaders to persevere in a conflict rather than to accept a Soviet victory as a fait accompli.

Even if the United States were to remain in a stance of strict neutrality its power would still loom large in the Kremlin's calculations because the Soviet Union would seek to maintain a favorable military balance with the United States while being engaged in a conflict with the Chinese. In that regard, it is worth noting that a Soviet disarming counter-force offensive against China's nuclear forces would have expended three-quarters of the Soviet force of intercontinental ballistic missiles in 1967, as much as one-half of the more modern types as late as 1972, but would only require a small fraction (under 10 percent) of the Soviet ICBM arsenal as of now (1982). More generally, the relative growth of Soviet military power in all categories has greatly reduced the indirect constraint imposed by American military strength upon [illegible] towards the Chinese.

For all these reasons the Soviet leaders could easily defer any decisive action to solve their China problem. In the meantime, however, they launched a massive construction program to transform the logistic and operational environment along the Chinese border. When the great increase in Soviet army deployments there took place between 1968 and 1972 (which doubled the number of divisions) the newly-sent Soviet forces found themselves at the end of very long, thinly stretched and highly insecure lines of supply. Far from being able to "jump off" for deep penetration attacks in the normal manner of Soviet mechanized forces, many of the divisions sent to the more remote sectors on the Chinese border would have had a hard time in combat even if fighting in place. Their own motor transport could only link them to the nearest tract of the Trans-Siberian railway; it could not possibly have supplied any fast advance of armored forces deep into Chinese territory.

The huge building effort that went into high gear during the nineteen-seventies changed the situation radically. Instead of huts and dirt roads, a full panoply of bases and communications has arisen. Well-built army camps are linked to the rear by rail lines that branch off from the Trans-Siberian Railway as well as hard-surface roads usable in all weather conditions. Within the divisional bases, the troops now live in permanent barracks, sized to accommodate the fully mobilized strength of each formation. Command posts and communications centers are fortified. A network of supply depots and repair facilities has been provided, which could now sustain prolonged operations. As a result of this very great investment in construction, supply storage and ancillary equipment, Soviet mechanized forces could now move out to attack with their logistic potential fully available for exploitation in depth, as coiled springs fully compressed.

During those same years, the Soviet Union's ability to use air power against the Chinese was also greatly increased. In part this was due to the building of properly equipped air bases around the Chinese border in place of the bare landing strips of the past; in part it reflected the general improvement of the Soviet air force, and notably the extensive replacement of short-range interceptor fighters of the MiG-21 variety by heavier fighter/fighter-bombers of the MiG-23 family, as well as the deployment of long-range strike aircraft such as the Su-24 and the Backfire bomber.

These great changes in real ground and air combat capabilities, the highly important ancillaries, including the construction of the B.A.M. railway (still unfinished), and also the Soviet civil defense program -- which is no doubt more seriously pursued in areas close to the border -- have transformed the ability of the Soviet Union to wage large-scale (non-nuclear) war upon the Chinese. Any quantitative comparison between the true military balance of 1967 and that of 1982 would be pointless: the change that has taken place is of a momentous, qualitative order. At the earlier date, Soviet military capabilities against the Chinese were already very considerable, but only at the extreme ends of the spectrum of war: in border skirmishing on the one hand, and in the general nuclear bombardment of cities on the other. In between these extremes, the Soviet Union's actual ability to wage (non-nuclear) war upon China was quite small. By now the Soviet Union has acquired the capabilities needed to achieve decisive results in large-scale warfare; notably it could now mount fast-moving offensive operations to penetrate Chinese territory up to depths of hundreds of [illegible] tions and communication nodes, and thus cut off and seize large tracts of territory, in the classic Blitzkrieg style. Soviet air power,

after brushing aside Chinese air defenses, could now deliver abundant air support, and mount heavy interdiction attacks as well. Moreover, the Soviet long-range air force could launch at the same time a full-scale bomber offensive against industrial and military targets throughout hinese territory, including areas very remote from the actual theaters of war.

The new Soviet capacity to mount large conventional operations against China means that for the first time the Kremlin how has some realistic war options. Even the most restrained of "surgical nuclear strikes" would entail horrific consequences and terrible risks for the Soviet Union. But non-nuclear war, even on a very large scale, is another matter. Border incidents can be easily staged to provide a plausible excuse for a wider attack, which can develop into a serious deep-penetration offensive; the strategic intent can thus be masked for a while in the guise of a reprisal action. To do so would prolong the effect of surprise, and also begin to engage the Chinese forces in a non-nuclear defensive reaction, thus setting the stage for a war in which the Soviet side refrains from using nuclear weapons (because it does not need them), while the Chinese on the other hand would find themselves deterred by Soviet nuclear superiority because they would be insufficiently provoked at each stage of the conflict.*

All this does not of course mean that nuclear capabilities on both sides would play no role in the outcome of a war, far from it; but it does mean that their role must be largely contextual and

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* The assumption is that the Soviet invasion armies would stay well away from the major populated areas. See below.

and invisible. The not-so-reliable Chinese strike-back capability against some Soviet cities can serve only to deter a Soviet attack upon Chinese cities, or rather to weaken the already weak Soviet ability to employ that particular threat to coerce the Chinese. By contrast, the entire panoply of Soviet nuclear capabilities in battlefield, theatre, and "strategic" weapons should effectively deter the use of Chinese nuclear capabilities, except in two cases: the Chinese would still of course retaliate if their own cities are attacked, and they may take the risk of using nuclear weapons in a tactical mode against Soviet forces actually inside Chinese territory. The real military worth of using the small and unsophisticated Chinese inventory of nuclear weapons against Soviet armor-mechanized forces is uncertain. The physical impact is likely to be small (it might take dozens of bombs to destroy a single division). In the circumstances of a Soviet offensive (without nuclear use) deep into their own territory, the Chinese leaders might calculate that nuclear strikes against Soviet invasion columns would cause a massive breakdown of morale among the enemy troops, and force an "agonizing reappraisal" upon their leaders in Moscow if not on the military commanders in between. On the other hand, the Chinese might be inhibited from thus using nuclear weapons to "shoot over the bow" (as the French, by the way, mean to use their Pluton missiles) by the further calculation that to do so could trigger a Soviet disarming counter-force offensive against all their remaining nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, this particular Chinese counter-move, unlike the totally unpersuasive threat of a retaliatory strike against Soviet cities, would amount to a serious risk for the Soviet Union -- especially since the difficulty of coping with large populations would in any case confine even an ambitious Soviet offensive to the thinly populated parts of the People's Republic; that is precisely where the Chinese

use of nuclear weapons in a "tactical" mode would be most acceptable to the Chinese leaders themselves.

Such considerations do undoubtedly limit the Soviet war-making potential against China. Nevertheless, the vast military investment made along the border has certainly changed the balance very greatly since the later nineteen-sixties, when the Soviet Union for all its claims to superpower status had very few military options against China, and none at all that were both of acceptable risk (and thus credible) and also of powerful effect.

The other dimension of Soviet strategy against China which provides further evidence of Bejing's new status as the "main enemy," has a primarily diplomatic character -- though even in the softer kind of Soviet diplomacy military instrumentalities must loom large. The goal of this strategic diplomacy has been to enroll as many of China's neighbors and near neighbors as possible in a Moscow-centered alliance directed against Bejing. Not one country of east and southeast Asia has any natural affinity for things Soviet or Russian, but after decades of increasingly serious effort, Soviet diplomacy has registered considerable success in building alliances of one sort or another around China. In (outer) Mongolia, a poor and land-locked state whose very legitimacy is open to challenge by the Chinese, the Soviet Union has its most dependent of all client-states. In Vietnam, Hanoi's regime has become more reliant on Soviet support than geopolitics alone would have dictated because of its imperialism -- although <u>any</u> Vietnamese regime must seek some kind of counterweight alliance given the imminent presence of China. In India finally, the Soviet Union has found a genuine ally. The relationship between the two is not based on a

transient amity between regimes, but rather on the pressure of strategical circumstances which will endure so long as the state of Pakistan continues to survive.

It is unfortunate for Moscow that although India is by far the greatest military power among its allies, it is not, however, a particularly useful ally precisely for military purposes. Specifically, India's military strength cannot significantly restrict the ability of the Chinese to deploy forces against the Soviet Union, simply because neither side can deploy large numbers of troops or much heavy equipment in the very high mountain terrain of the Sino-Indian border. Moreover, the Indian alliance has its costs for Moscow, since it ensures the diffidence of the lesser countries round about including Bangla Desh, Burma and Ceylon; and of course it virtually guarantees the hostility of Pakistan.

In the case of Vietnam, by contrast, there being no impassable mountain barrier between the two, Hanoi's activism and disproportionate military strength oblige the Chinese to assign large forces to their Vietnamese front. This is especially useful for the Soviet Union since that front happens to be exceptionally remote from the Sino-Russian borders. In this case, therefore, the classic purpose of military alliance is amply fulfilled. Mongolia for its part offers a most useful basing area for Soviet forces (its own strength is insignificant) and it also provides a potentially useful political instrument, since that country can compete for the ethnic loyalties of the Mongols living within the borders of the People's Republic in Inner Mongolia. Elsewhere, Soviet diplomacy has been disappointed to varying degrees. North Korea continues to preserve its freedom of action

by its successful and long-standing policy of equidistance between Moscow and Bejing; even though the Soviet Union is far more able to give aid and support, the North Koreans refuse to prejudice their independence by joining the Soviet camp. And in South-East Asia of course the Vietnamese connection denies any other alliance for Moscow, at least for now. In that part of the world, it is not the friendship of those who arm and support Vietnam that is now in demand, but rather the help of those who seek to contain the Vietnamese. In the longer term, if Chinese power does increase, Vietnamese strength will no doubt come to be appreciated as a shield against Chinese domination, but for now its alliance with Hanoi has earned Moscow two more indirect clients, the Vietnamese-controlled Cambodian and Laotian regimes, but also the hostility of the increasingly significant ASEAN nations, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

There is a sharp and most significant contrast between the entire attitude of the Soviet Union towards the West and towards China. Moscow's diplomatic strategy in Europe is crafted out of blandishments on arms control and trade, while the element of coercion is tacit, always carefully controlled and mostly muted. The Kremlin's propaganda and diplomacy seek to persuade the governments and peoples of Western Europe that the United States is a reckless and thoroughly unreliable guarantor of their security while being a ruthless economic competitor -- all this in contrast to a Soviet Union which is depicted as very willing to establish friendly relations if only American military power is first removed from the scene, and which offers in the meantime very profitable opportunities for trade. Soviet declarations aimed at the United States stress different themes at different times, but focus mainly on the denial of any real threat and explicitly denounce American claims that the Soviet Union is engaged in a quest

for military superiority. Moscow's conciliatory diplomacy is perfectly consistent with its overriding strategic goal of dividing the Alliance. Any threat too overt, any brutal intimidation would only undermine that strategy.

Moscow's strategy towards the Chinese is of a charactcter altogether different. It amounts to a vast encirclement. Along the thousands of miles of the common border, Soviet land forces do not constitute a defensive perimeter; they amount rather, to a ring of offensive deployments. Mongolia is for all practical purposes an integral part of the Soviet array, while on the far side of China, to the south and southwest, Vietnam and India watch a large part of the remaining land frontiers of China. In between, the Soviet Navy's traffic around the coasts of China amounts to a thin but increasing presence, potentially threatening. Owing to the great importance of coastal shipping for the Chinese economy, the Soviet navy's inability to mount significant amphibious operations does not mean that it could not intervene powerfully in the context of a general offensive. In contrast to all this, the "soft" diplomacy which looms so large in Soviet dealing with the West is distinctly less prominent in Moscow's China policy. The recurrent attempts at border-delimitation talks seem to be pursued with a distinct lack of conviction on the part of the Soviet Union.

All these reasons suggest that the People's Republic of China has now become the Soviet Union's "main enemy", and therefore the most likely target of war-schemes aimed at enhancing its strategic security. The growth of Soviet military strength vis à vis China need not however

culminate in a war. An alternative outcome -- just as likely -- is that Bejing will belatedly recognize that some accommodation to the reality of Soviet power can no longer be avoided. We may be quite certain that the Soviet leaders retain that very hope. A disengagement of Chinese troops from the entire eastern and northern periphery that runs along the Soviet border, the suspension of Bejing's world-wide diplomatic campaign against the Soviet Union, and perhaps some gesture of ideological non-belligerence if not outright subordination to the CPSU might be the goals of some at least of the Soviet leaders. Such Chinese concessions would of course be well worth having, but for the Soviet Union they have the very great defect of being reversible. The Kremlin leaders know that any favorable settlement negotiated with the Chinese in their present weakness would merely allow them time to build up their overall industrial strength, thus increasing their long-term military potential; then, in due course, all concessions would be withdrawn. Hence the superior attraction, one presumes, of permanent map-changing solutions to the China problem -- solutions which must be costly and entail grave risk to be sure -- but which would have the capital virtue of being irreversible, except by force.

This is not the place for any detailed military scenarios but the various constraints reviewed above do in fact define quite closely the most probable form of Soviet military action.

At the level of grand strategy, any Soviet war-scheme must start from two premises: that China is not destroyable, and that it cannot

be occupied in its totality to be remade to order, à la Afghanistan or for that matter 1968 Czechoslovakia. This leaves only one feasible goal for a Soviet war: if an independent China of growing power can neither be tolerated nor destroyed, then it must be divided.

What Soviet military power can achieve directly is the conquest of territories which can then be turned into client-states; obviously this is only feasible where the population includes a large non-Chinese element. One model is the People's Republic of (outer) Mongolia; another is Tuva, a Chinese dependency until 1914, a Russian protectorate thereafter, and a Soviet-made People's Republic (Tannu-Tuva) until annexed in 1944. And Soviet military power may also be used in the hope of achieving indirect political results: the Kremlin leaders may calculate that if the Chinese armies in the field are defeated swiftly and decisively, in humiliating fashion, this would undermine the prestige of the central government, and certainly diminish its powers of coercion, thus releasing the separatist tendencies that the profound diversities of China naturally breed.

As a purely practical matter, the provinces and especially those which are remote from Bejing would have to look after themselves if the central government is devastated by war; and in any case Bejing's authority is not what it used to be now that Chairman Mao is gone and the myth of higher-party infallibility has been very thoroughly exploded. In such circumstances, the important provinces of the south and south-west, Kwantung (Guangzhou) and Szechwan (Sichuan), of the coastal privinces to the south, Fukien (Fujian), dissident Shanghai, and

others too might emerge as de facto independent; they would certainly have to cope with a conflict on their own. Some provinces would then naturally be drawn into relations with outside powers across the sea, while others might even orient themselves on the Soviet Union if only because of geographic imperatives. Since unity is no more a norm in Chinese history than fragmentation on provincial lines, the division of China may seem an attainable goal to the Soviet Leaders. But of course this is not a goal that military power as such can assuredly achieve directly -- and there is always the possibility that a Soviet attack could have the opposite result of inspiring a heightened sense of all-Chinese solidarity in the face of the enemy. Much would depend on the psychological circumstances of a war and Bejing's recent record of governance.

Nor can the two ways of dividing China be combined, since the loss of vast tracts of national territory to "independent" states of non-Chinese character is most unlikely to encourage separatist tendencies among the Han-Chinese themselves. For this reason, the Soviet Union must choose between a peripheral and a "core" grand strategy, the former offering results more certain, the latter more far-reaching.

At the level of theater-strategy, the Soviet offensive must in any case aim at swift penetrations, in great depth. At the operational level, moreover, the scheme of the Soviet action would of course seek to exploit the superior mobility of Soviet mechanized forces as well as the huge advantage in airpower. The goal would be to cut off large slices of territory while evading main enemy troop concentrations on the border itself, and the more elaborate of the defended zones which the

Chinese have established, with fixed tank barriers, extensive minefields and protected gun positions. Chinese forces and positions thus bypassed would find themselves isolated and encircled once the Soviet penetration thrusts meet deep in their rear. Until a few years ago, the Soviet Union would have been unable to execute such an ambitious theater strategy. Advancing forces could not have been kept supplied to sustain thrusts of hundreds of miles, and neither could the Soviet air force have provided timely close support in large amounts nor could it have mounted precision attacks deep inside Chinese territory. As of now, all of these capabilities are in place.

But in one respect, Soviet military power has not improved at all: For all its 180 divisions, the Soviet army has little in the way of infantry and no real foot infantry at all.* It is therefore thoroughly unsuited for the control of large densely populated areas, and all manpower-intensive forms of combat, from street-fighting to rear-area security duties against large numbers of elusive guerillas. With helicopters, even the small number of infantrymen in the all-mechanized divisions of the Soviet army can easily control guerillas in open country that offers little cover, but elsewhere there is no substitute for large forces of infantry.

What emerges from this is that the densely-populated eastern rim of China and Southern Manchuria is as inimical to the Soviet army as

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* Excluding the seven elite airborne divisions and the helicopter-assault regiments, the total infantry of the Soviet army amounts to the dismount crews of the troop carriers of the Motor-Rifle divisions, and those of the combat carriers of the Tank divisions.

forest, steppe and desert were to the Romans. If the Soviet Union did invade the eastern provinces where most of the Chinese live, its armored columns and modern airpower could control much territory as they undoubtedly would in areas of open terrain and thin population. The invasion itself could no doubt be easily achieved, but the mobile columns of the Soviet army would become vulnerable to raids, sabotage and all forms of elusive warfare as soon as their forward movement comes to an end. the Soviet army might thus achieve all its planned objectives, and easily, only to be bogged down in endless petty combat. It is hard to believe that the leaders of the Soviet Union would deliberately begin a protracted guerilla war by invading areas of large population. If that possibility is therefore excluded, the sphere of possible Soviet warfare must be limited to the thinly populated West, that is Sinkiang (Xinjiang), Tsinghai (Qinghai), northern Kansu (Gansu) and Inner Mongolia as well as portions of Heilungkiang province (Heilongjiang) in the Manchurian north. Taken together, and adding Tibet -- which must be lost to Bejing if the rest is lost -- these provinces and "autonomous regions" account for roughly 56% of the total territory of the People's Republic but only some 6% of the population, or not more than sixty million people in all. Moreover, at least one third of them belong to non-Chinese nationalities, mostly very unhappy with the Han-Chinese domination they now endure. Obviously, the geographic setting and the demography would preclude any serious guerilla resistance in the aftermath of an invasion especially since the entire "West" is arid and offers little cover. At the same time, the population-base offers a ready cultural

basis for the creation of client-states which would have a genuine national claim to legitimacy internally, and also to some extent internationally. In a world that affirms the universality of the principle of self-determination, the "liberation" of Bejing's subject nationalities would not be universally condemned.

Even if it cannot induce fragmentation on provincial lines, and even if territory is conquered and a client-state created only in Sinkiang and Qinghai (e.g., a "turkestan People's Republic"), the Soviet Union could gain a number of important strategic advantages from the venture. First, the de facto military boundary would be shifted eastwards by a thousand miles or so, depriving Bejing of its territorial shield to the west, while adding that much interposed space to the Soviet security system. Second, since Tibet must also become independent once the major Sino-Tibetan overland routes are cut (the Sichuan route is much too tenuous a link), China would cease to be an all-Asian power, in contact with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and would be reduced in effect to an East Asian power only, with a correspondingly diminished role in world affairs. Third, important Chinese military and scientific facilities would be overrun (or forced to evacuate) by the Soviet advance, and many more could be destroyed in a concurrent (non-nuclear) "strategic" bombing campaign. Finally, a swift elegant Soviet offensive culminating in the emergence of a "liberated" turkestan would expose the weakness of China's armed forces, and also the incapacity of the United States to save a de facto ally from crushing defeat. The

credibility of Soviet military power to friends and prospective enemies alike would be enhanced in corresponding degree -- perhaps thereby transforming some enemies into neutrals, and some neutrals into clients more or less subservient: to possess the physical attributes of military power is one thing, to demonstrate the ability of using such power effectively is quite another -- and altogether more persuasive.

In these diverse ways, the strategic security of the Soviet Union could be enhanced by a limited but map-changing war upon China. there is no doubt that the Soviet armed forces could accomplish a "Turkestan" offensive in short order and it is hard to see what countervailing power could prevent a favorable outcome for the Soviet Union. Given the very great imbalance in the nuclear forces of the two sides and the fact that none of the core areas of Chinese life would be invaded, the Chinese could not rely on nuclear deterrence to protect the vast, remote territories that their regular forces cannot defend and in which there is little scope for guerilla warfare. On the other hand, the small but real possibility of "tactical" Chinese nuclear strikes upon Soviet forces inside Chinese territory cannot be entirely dismissed, and there must also be some residual possibility of "irrational" Chinese nuclear retaliation upon one or two Soviet cities. but if NATO does not hold itself adequately secure notwithstanding its great panoply of battlefield, theater and strategic nuclear weapons, in addition to ground and air forces both large and rather well equipped, China can hardly expect to obtain a satisfactory degree of deterrence against a peripheral Soviet

offensive from its much weaker non-nuclear forces and from its small and primitive nuclear arsenal.

Nevertheless to make war upon China the Soviet leaders must obviously accept a large risk; some have persuasively argued that they will not act under any conceivable circumstances. That may be so, but the "turkestan" war-scheme offers the most plausible way of converting the transitory military advantage of the Soviet Union into a permanent enhancement of the empire's security. Again, it can be argued that this scheme, or indeed any other such operation, would weaken rather than strengthen the long-term security of the Soviet Union since it would engender an implacable Chinese hostility that might be manifest in chronic warfare on the borders of the new client-state. First, in a technical vein, it will be noted that even if the new military frontier is set a thousand miles east of the present line it will still be running through terrain that virtually prohibits an effective guerilla resistance, and which also happens to maximize the tactical advantages of Soviet air and mechanized forces against Chinese armies that must consist mainly of infantry. A petty border warfare of raids and skirmishes may long continue, but it is unlikely to detain more than a dozen Soviet divisions. It will be recalled that the prospect of inaugurating warfare of long duration did not dissuade the Soviet Union from invading Afghanistan -- where geographic circumstances and the nature of the population are so much more favorable to guerilla war than would be the case in Xinjiang. Military power can seldom be employed in ideal circumstances -- and yet

it is still employed by all manner of states that are not even great military empires, and with some frequency. Any war that successfully changes the map must engender the long-term hostility of the loser -- and yet attempts to change the map are still made by all manner of states. But to argue that the Kremlin would recoil from any war-scheme for fear of provoking the implacable hostility of China implies a most fundamental misunderstanding of the essential nature of Soviet statecraft. The Soviet Union is not primarily in the "goodwill" business; it is in the security business. It is not the voluntary goodwill of those who remain free to give or withhold that the Kremlin truly seeks but rather the obedience of subjects and the deference of lesser powers. To be sure, where obedience is not yet a realistic goal, goodwill is most eagerly pursued, and where deference remains out of the question mere respect is gladly accepted instead, but the Soviet Union will not give up the prospect of further enhancing its strategic strength for fear of increasing Chinese hostility because its leaders do not fundamentally believe that security can be obtained from the friendship of other nations. They believe only in <u>preclusive</u> security, that is to say in the security that is assuredly provided by one's own strength quite independently of the goodwill of others. Besides, in the case at hand, it is a fair guess that the implacable hostility of China is already a basic assumption of Soviet policy -- and there are no degrees in implacability.

<u>Expansion for Regional Security</u>

The desired pattern of imperial control that requires a belt of client-states in front of the [illegible] itself is largely achiev-

only in the West. Fir'and under its own special arrangements does duty for a client-state on the international scene without suffering any great loss of its domestic freedoms. Then south across the Baltic there is the double belt of East Germany and Poland; the latter of course must always be restive in some degree but ultimately it is well-secured nevertheless, and not only by its own policemen backed by Soviet military power. Since today's Poland holds large tracts of land that Germans might reasonably claim as their own, a new partition in favor of East Germany cannot be altogether removed from the realm of possibilities; if Poland ever does acquire a government that seeks a genuine independence, that free Poland would still have to defer to the Soviet Union, for it would still need security -- if only from East Germany. Then comes Czechosolovakia, Huntary and Bulgaria, with Romania within that array and Yugoslavia outside, the first functioning more or less as a Finland in reserve, and the other as a true buffer state.

In none of these lands are the Russians loved or even accepted as fitting overlords. but so long as the client regimes persist, none of their territory will be available to the enemies of the Soviet Union to serve as a basing ground for soldiers, or as the refuge of nationalist dissidence for the non-Russian populations inside the empire.

Beyond the limits of Europe the next land border, with Turkey in the Caucasus, neither has its client state nor does it need one. For all military purposes the sector is well secured by Turkey's weakness

and by the unsuitability of the terrain for any serious attack upon the empire. Politically, the sector is even better secured since it is in the Caucasus just across the border that the empire has its Armenian population in concentrated form -- and Turkey is the least likely of all countries to offer its territory to Armenian nationalist dissidence.

Further to the east the situation is by no means as satisfactory from the Soviet point of view. There is no client-state on the long border with Persia and the need for one or more may be felt at any time -- if only because this is an appetite that may be satisfied so easily. To be sure the Russians have little to fear from the Persia of the Ayatollahs. Of the many Muslims in the Soviet Union only a few are Shias, and until a new Shah appears on the scene to restore order and resume the quest for material progress, Persia must also offer a most unattractive example to the security-minded among the Soviet Asians. But to a well ordered empire, the turbulence of a direct neighbor must be troublesome, and to an empire as powerful as the Soviet it must also be greatly tempting.

Perhaps it is true, as many claim, that the experience of Afghanistan will suffice to discourage the Kremlin from any further assumption of duties in the governance of Muslims. But one cannot be certain of the true meaning of that example. Where an impatient democracy might see a disastrous outcome and endless rebellion, an empire might view the same evidence differently, as a normal progression from initial conquest to a gradual pacification which will mature in due course.

The Roman Senate allowed its legates two hundred years to make Spain a peaceful province and even in these faster times the Politburo may choose to grant twenty years to the Soviet generals to pacify Afghanistan (more or less the time it took to bring a totalitarian peace to Soviet central Asia, after the Revolution.). In considering the Afghan example when deliberating over Persia, it will not escape the attention of the Politburo that of all the proples of Afghanistan the ones that are Persian (or most closely resemble them) are also the least troublesome of the empire's new subjects. It seems that it is in the nature of the Persians, more than most peoples, to be fierce with those who present themselves as weak, and to be meek with the strong.

The real protection that Persia now has is Moscow's hope that if it refrains from taking the northern parts it might find itself with great influence over the whole. As the regime of the fanaticals and the priests moves towards its appointed end, the Soviet Union has its own candidates for the inevitable succession. There chances are indeterminable but must be improving as time passes. Should Persia fall under the control of left-wing elements inimical to the United States and the West in general, the Soviet Union might acquire some sort of Asiatic Finland on its borders. And the Kremlin leaders may hope for much more if the faithful Tudeh Communists somehow come to power, though that is not a likely prospect.

Should the Soviet Union be disappointed by the political roulette in Tehran, it might then collect large winnings all the same, by creating

one or more client-states in the predominantly non-Farsi areas of the Shah's former empire. The dominant population only in the central plateau, the Farsis or Persians proper are no more than a minority elsewhere -- and all the agitations of recent years have greatly enhanced the consciousness of the non-Farsis.

The most obvious possibility is a recreation of the Azerbaijan client-state that was actually in being until 1946. As Turks, the Azeris have a well-defined national identity and their numbers are large enough (11,000,000+) to sustain a substantial state. Another possibility would be to form a Turkmenistan in the north-east of the country, a perfect match for the Turkmen SSR across the border. More ambitiously, a strategically much more valuable Baluch state might be formed in the south-east, to obtain a client-state corridor leading straight to the shores of the Persian Gulf. Finally, there would also be room for a Kurdistan that might eventually be aggrandized by expansion into Iraq if that were deemed desirable. The Soviet Union does not at present own the Kurdish independence movement as it once did, having sold out that long-held card to the Iraqis (at a time when Iraq was the Soviet Union's most favored Arab ally). But the Kurds still want their own state, and the Soviet Union might see benefit in giving them one.

The dissolution of Persia into a number of separate states (including that of the Persians themselves) may well come about spontaneously, and regardless of Soviet desires. Given the fragmented ethnic composition of Persia, where diverse peoples of diverse culture and

language are clustered into distinct regions, unity can only be contrived by a strong central government. In its absence, each ethnic region tends to follow local leaders in a natural drift towards de facto independence. And if ethnic states do emerge from the chaos of the Ayatollahs, those that are directly adjacent to the Soviet Union will quite naturally become its clients, not only out of weakness but also because their overland communications with the outside world will depend on Soviet goodwill if -- as it is highly likely -- an unfriendly residual Persia denies safe and economic passage to the ports of the Gulf. For the Soviet Union it would be essential to ensure that any succession states to in fact become clients, for otherwise they would automatically become dangerous, given the fact that there are Soviet Azeris, Turkmens and even Kurds inside the empire, who also have their dissatisfied national sentiments.

Should the Soviet Union choose to force events, no major military operation would be needed to achieve the "liberation" of the Azeris, Kurds, Turkmens and Baluchis of Persia. A quick entry by fast road columns that could only be feebly opposed by whatever small Persian garrisons remain on the frontier, would be preceded by air landings to secure the way, and followed immediately by ceremonial marches into the nascent states -- culminating in the appointment of new-made governments, each with its contingent of Moscow's men. (Local Communists aside, the Soviet Union has its own Azeris, Turkmens and Kurds in government service).

Beyond Iran, Afghanistan is now being remade into its new status as a closely controlled client-state. the resistance continues but the Soviet Union shows no sign of being inclined to give up the right. It means to outlast the guerillas and extinguish their strength by as much killing as they will take. The most striking aspect of the whole affair is not what is happening but rather what is not: there is no great American effort to sustain the resistance by a most generous supply of arms of the highest quality and right types; there is no outpouring of Muslim and "Third World" support for the Resistance nor any move to give it international recognition on PLO lines; there is no world-wide tide of protests and demonstrations. It seems that the world has resigned itself to the Soviet Union's imperial will.

VII. IN CONCLUSION: SOVIET GRAND STRATEGY AND ITS FUTURE

The upkeep of the Soviet empire is an expensive proposition for its subjects. The armed forces themselves consume roughly one sixth of the total output of the economy. And then there is the internal army, of security troops, gendarmes, border guards, police uniformed and in plain clothes, full-time agents and part-time informers; this other army is known to include some 460,000 KGB agents and MVD troops organized and equipped in military fashion, but the overall total is wholly unknown. It would be pointless, however, to try to calculate the cost of the empire's domestic control apparatus as such, since the entire structures of the State, Party and centrally planned economy should be considered as a single gigantic internal-security system. Naturally those vast bureaucracies have important social and economic functions as well, but the imperative of political control comes first. One would therefore have to estimate what the lands of the empire, its industry and its people could produce under a free-market system to be able to calculate just how great is the true cost of the present structure. And nowadays there is one more bill to be paid. The Soviet Union has long ago ceased to extract a net economic gain from its client-states and dependencies, and in recent years the cost of supporting Cuba, Vietnam, Ethiopia and other poor relations had been significant. The total cost of the empire to its subjects must therefore be estimated as very much higher than the 14% or so of the total gross national product which is formally assigned to the armed forces. More likely, to hazard a guess, the cost of empire

is closer to 50% or so of a full-blown war economy than to the Western 4-6% given over to military outlays. Unlike most other empires of history, the Soviet directly owns its economic base, so that no shadow-army of tax collectors and enforcers is necessary. But this modest economy if dwarfed by the high expense of the largest empire in the history of man.

From the viewpoint of the Russians themselves, however, the empire is a much more economical proposition. Collectively, it is the Russians who really control the total array of Soviet, client-state and dependent power, both military and not, but they only pay for part of the upkeep since the non-Russians within the Soviet Union and in the wider imperial system are also forced to pay their share. Without the empire, the Russian nation might have the power of three or four Polands; with the empire the Russians are the most powerful single nation on the planet. It is impossible to say how many Russians would voluntarily accept their present level of economic sacrifice for the sake of the psychic rewards of being part of an imperial nation, but the fact that the Russians themselves only pay the bill in part must have some influence on Russian attitudes towards the Soviet system.

In this century, the world has witnessed the voluntary renunciation of empire by the British, Belgians, French, Dutch and Portuguese as well as the Spanish -- whose overseas possessions were left very small by their American war. In each case, the withdrawal from empire was

voluntary, in the sense that the metropolitan power was not actually expelled from its possessions by direct force. but in each case, widespread civil unrest, outright revolt and even armed insurgence in some of the dependencies imposed large human and financial penalties on the imperial power, and created the fear that violence might soon spread to dependencies still at peace with their lot.

In the case of Britain, France and the Netherlands, the moral legitimacy of imperial rule over other nations was strongly challenged at home long before there was any serious violent resistance abroad: liberal democracies could not comfortably maintain illiberal colonial regimes. In the British case, the renunciation of empire was decidedly more voluntary than imposed, for it was there that the imperial idea was most widely and strongly rejected by Liberals and Socialists. When a Labor government came to power in 1945, the empire was doomed, but even under uninterrupted Tory rule it would not have lasted for much longer -- for among the Tories too the belief had spread that the era of empire was over. In France the liberal predisposition to challenge the imperial idea was weaker, if only because the French empire was much less illiberal at least racially, and also because some colonies and especially Algeria were lands of French settlement seemingly on their way to assimilation. Moreover as the power defeated in 1940, France was most reluctant to give up its last claim to greatness, as such things were then defined. Thus it took two costly wars to finally induce the renunciation. In the Dutch case, the challenge to imperial power in the East Indies came early in 1945, and much too soon. After their

own experience of defeat and occupation the Dutch were in no mood for a purely voluntary withdrawal; this was imposed in any case by insurgency. that was to create Indonesia with the support of Britain and the United States, otherwise friendly powers to the Dutch. In Portugal itself the liberal challenge to empire was insignificant. It took colonial warfare exceptionally prolonged and particularly costly for a poor nation to bring about decolonization -- and it only came after the conservative dictatorship that ruled Portugal itself was overthrown.

None of these circumstances are present in the case of the Soviet empire. A totalitarian regime, unlike a liberal-democratic one, does not find itself ill-placed in a contradictory stance when it imposes the same dictatorial rule on other nations too. Ultimately, it is only the quinetessentially Western belief in the inherent worth of each and every human, and in the right of humans to define themselves in national groups of their own choosing that stands against the practical notions that the strong can best order the affairs of the weak, and that the more advanced nationality can govern the less advanced better than they can govern themselves. The body of ideas that destroyed the legitimacy of the Western empires in their own homes, among their own elites, has never had a sturdy growth in the Russian political realm, nor even in Russian political thought. Even now these ideas seem to have much influence within a social group itself very narrow, the Westernizing urban elite. but of course one can make no certain judgement of such matters: it suffices to recall the sudden efflorescence of the Greek-Jewish-Christian ideal in Bejing itself, when the veil was briefly

lifted, to wonder whether it is not the case that Western individualism as a moral concept has silently tunneled its way into the consciousness of the whole world. In the meantime, the Soviet claim to trans-national legitimacy based on the supposed solidarity of the working classes of all nations is no doubt less and less persuasive to non-Russians, but it remains a useful delusion for such Russians as desire the imperial role -- and who want to be spared from the moral discomfort of upholding a system morally repugnant.

But it would be false to see only ideas and ideals at work. Had the empires of Western Europe not encountered a rising tide of native resistance it is doubtful if decolonization would have taken place; even if the intellectuals and the moralists wanted to surrender imperial power, some cost had to be felt before decolonization would receive popular support. And the native challenges to Soviet rule have been weak indeed: since 1945 we have seen only short-lived uprisings in East Germany and Hungary, the feeble and disarmed attempt at defection of the Czech regime, some unrest in Poland, and most recently the very remote insurgency of the newly conquered and most primitive Afghans whose cause can elicit very little sympathy from Russians.

Thus the two great agencies that resulted in the dissolution of the Western empires are both weak in the Soviet case, there being neither much moral self-doubt among the master-nationality, nor much unrest among the subjected peoples. There is on the other hand a political idea in circulation in some Soviet circles at least that is potentially

corrosive of the will to empire: so long as their state is the prison-house of peoples, the Russians themselves will be the least free and the most poor of all the nations of Europe. The imperial consciousness which the regime now deliberately encourages as a substitute for the waning ideological appeal of Marxism-Leninism, entails a subtle danger: it attracts attention not only to the imperial role, but also to its cost. As with everything else that is not visible, concrete, stable and of classic form, and thus observable by photography from space, this Soviet phenomenon cannot be observed, let alone measured. We do not know the present importance of this idea, and cannot even begin to estimate its future impact. What we do know with certainty is that at present neither this nor any other cause of dissidence has been of sufficient weight to induce either a liberalizing accommodation by the Soviet regime, or the restoration of the Stalinist system of police terror.

An expensive proposition to its subjects as a whole, less expensive but still costly to the Russians themselves, the empire is on the other hand very efficient indeed as a producer of power for the Kremlin rulers. From their very special point of view, the empire may be seen as a "power multiplier" of very great effectiveness. In 1913 the Czar's Russia had a gross national product that amounted to roughtly 40% of the American G.N.P. In those days Russia was already of course a Great Power but only as one among several; it was certainly not the leading European power. Nowadays, the Soviet-American G.N.P. ratio is

of the order of 50% -- thus only slightly improved, notwithstanding the inherent catch-up advantage of the more backward, and more than two generations of severe sacrifice that was supposed to yield very rapid economic growth. And yet, the Soviet Union has so greatly increased its strength that it is now the world's leading military power.

Somewhat mechanistically, we may estimate the "power-efficiency" of the Soviet empire by its ability to convert GNP into power. By that standard, we may say that the Soviet system is roughly five times as efficient as the Alliance that embraces the United States, NATO-Europe and Japan, since the combined GNPs of those countries are roughly five times as great as the Soviet, while their conjoint power is at best equal.

It will be recognized immediately that a power position so efficiently acquired must be correspondingly fragile since it owes so much to what others refrain from doing, as opposed to what the Soviet Union itself does. Neither the United States nor any of its major allies convert anywhere near as much of their GNPs as the Soviet Union does and this means that they could dc much more -- indeed they could submerge the entire Soviet military effort in a few years of defense budgets amounting to 10% of the GNP (as opposed to the Soviet Union's 14-15%). Neither the United States nor any of its allies emulate the vast Soviet effort in political warfare, based on the entire array of controlled Communist Parties, "front" organizations, agents of influence,

radio broadcasting "white" and "black", trade-union operatives, newspaper and book publishing, overt and covert news-agency operations and systematic disinformation. And there is no Western counterpart at all for the Soviet effort in covert operations, including the sponsorship of many terrorist organizations. In such things, the possibility of competition is more remote but the present feeble passivity scarcely defines the maximum potential of Western activity.

Western observers must regard the possibility of an all-out competition for power as totally unrealistic; they might fear that even the small effort now made will not be sustained. As it is, the Alliance is only preserved because the fears generated by the Soviet Union's military growth just barely overcome the natural tendencies that stand ready to undermine each country's effort for defense, and the cohesion of the whole. but the Kremlin rulers must consider matters more prudently and they no doubt are much more conscious of the vast untapped potential that the Alliance retains unused.

If Soviet military power continues to grow in relation to that of the United States and the Alliance; if Soviet blandishments and all manner of internal restraints overcome the defensive reflex that the very growth of Soviet power should otherwise stimulate, the Kremlin will eventually consolidate its power-position, by forcing some members of the Alliance into a frightened neutrality. That danger is already imminent for the West but until it actually materializes the fragility

of the Soviet power-position must persist. That is why it is only a Soviet leadership in any case pessimistic of the regime's future that will be tempted to exercise the option of expansionist war in a major fashion. For in the Soviet case in addition to all the classic risks of war, and in addition also to the new risks of the nuclear age there is the peculiar further risk that more aggressive expansion will precipitate an Alliance-wide mobilization response which could quickly erode the Kremlin's power position down to a "natural" level -- a level, that is, where the power of the Soviet Union begins to approximate its economic capacity. That is the great deterrence, but as with all other deterrents its credibility must be actively sustained. It can hardly be argued that the Western reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and to the Polish "state of war" two years later did anything to sustain belief in the capacity of the Alliance to respond effectively to provocation. If in the Kremlin the fatal conjunction between regime pessimism and military confidence is indeed affected, and if at the same time it is also believed that the nations of Western Europe and Japan will simply refuse to respond seriously to anything short of a direct attack, thus undermining both the capacity and the incentive of an American response, the Soviet Union will be set on the road to war -- a war neither Western nor nuclear but quite possibly catastrophic all the same. The pieces are even now on the board; the game could begin at any time.

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